

# UC Riverside

## UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

A History of the Founding of the Institutes of Religion, 1926-1936: A Case Study of a Religious Education Movement in American Higher Education

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9n01r7n7>

### Author

Tomlinson, Terry Lyn

### Publication Date

2011

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
RIVERSIDE

A History of the Founding of the Institutes of Religion, 1926-1936: A Case Study of a  
Religious Education Movement in American Higher Education

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Terry Lyn Tomlinson

December 2011

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Margaret Nash, Chairperson

Dr. Begoña Echeverria

Dr. John Wills

Copyright by  
Terry Lyn Tomlinson  
2011

The Dissertation of Terry Lyn Tomlinson is approved:

---

---

---

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Anyone who has written a dissertation learns that although at times it is a lonely path that one must tread there are many contributors who make the final product possible. The completion of this degree is the fulfillment of a dream that I have had for many years. I had planned to do this decades ago, but choices and responsibilities did not allow me that opportunity.

I want to first acknowledge the loving support of my wife, Sally, and her willingness to allow me the time and space to attend graduate school while working full-time. She has had to endure many sacrifices beyond what should be expected of a spouse; there have been many events and occasions that she has had to experience alone because her graduate student husband had to stay home and study or do research. She helped me in numerous ways, but mainly her emotional support and confidence in me have been immeasurable.

I thank my seven children: Diane, Cheryl, Robert, Michael, Gary, John, and Brian for their support. Each child has given me the inspiration to complete this major project. As a father and grandfather, I recognize how important example can be in teaching; I hope that my example in pursuing graduate studies will serve as a model for my posterity. Although my parents, Joseph and Marie Sorensen Tomlinson, loved learning and were teachers all their lives in a church setting, they did not have the opportunity or the means to attend college. Nevertheless, they instilled in their three children the love of learning and the desire to attend college to acquire degrees in higher education. I want to ensure that education and learning are a legacy that I leave to my grandchildren.

Dr. Margaret Nash, my dissertation advisor, has been a true mentor; it was in her class on “History of American Education” that I realized that a dissertation related to some aspect of the history of education was what I would eventually pursue. Her passion and knowledge of history were models to me, and she continues to be a role model as a scholar and professor. I discovered that she really cares about her graduate students and wants them to reach their potential. Her reassuring words of “You can do this” have enabled me to persevere in moments when I felt I was in a valley of doubt and despair. Her ability to ask the thought-provoking questions has caused me to ponder and rethink my conclusions on more than one occasion. Her comments and suggestions have caused me to write a better study and have helped me to sharpen my focus on what should be the significant issues of my work. I am grateful to the other two members of my committee: Dr. Begoña Echeverria for her passion for clarity as well as Dr. John Wills for his critical comments and suggestions. Both of them are models of careful scholarship and are excellent professors, whose classes have been stimulating and enlightening.

In addition to the members of my dissertation committee, I want to acknowledge the other professors in the Graduate School of Education who have guided my studies while at the University of California Riverside. While too numerous to mention each professor individually, the professors who have influenced me the most through their thought-provoking classes are: Dr. James T. Dillon, Dr. Reba Page, Dr. Judith Sandholtz, and Dr. Melanie Sperling.

The creation of the History Writing Group (HWG) at UCR was Dr. Nash’s brainchild. She gathered graduate students, professors, and other persons interested in the

history of education and gave us the impetus to gather on a regular basis to share work, to ask for help, to discuss ideas and methods, and to motivate and to inspire one another. It provided, and continues to provide, a venue for sharing which is necessary for creating a learning community of scholars. I am grateful to the core of people who attended and shared their work as well as their feedback to my work. They have been a valuable resource for my growth and learning.

One who does research on the history of education must access the primary sources and documents that are the raw materials of the discipline. The sources do not speak for themselves, but without access to them, the educational story cannot be told. I now have a keen appreciation for librarians and archivists who provide so many valuable services for historians. First, at UCR, I want to thank the director of Interlibrary Loan Services, Janet Moores, and her excellent staff. In a very professional and efficient manner, they helped me locate and obtain books, dissertations, theses, articles, etc. all of which have been valuable to my study. Second, I acknowledge the kind assistance of Julie Monroe, Library Assistant in the Special Collections and Archives at the main library at the University of Idaho. While visiting Moscow, Ms. Monroe went out of her way to help me use the library's collection. Third, at the Latter-day Saint Church History Library in Salt Lake City, I received valuable help especially from Alan Morrell as well as others on their staff and the volunteers who donate their time and talents. Fourth, I want to acknowledge the many staff members in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. I spent many

hours there reading and transcribing documents that formed the backbone of my study. The staff always treated me professionally and courteously.

In addition to the libraries and archives that I visited, I corresponded with or visited individual Institutes of Religion to secure documents about the history of each institute. I want to acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of Dr. Kip Jenkins, the Director of the Institute of Religion at Moscow, Idaho. Dr. Jenkins gave me a tour of the present building and allowed me to photocopy some important documents from their library. He also shared some vintage photographs of the original institute building. Dr. John L. Fowles, an instructor at the Logan Institute adjacent to the Utah State University, shared with me a summary history he authored of the Logan Institute. Jack S. Marshall of the Salt Lake City Institute adjacent to the University of Utah donated a copy of Mary Lythgoe Bradford's biography, *Lowell L. Bennion: Teacher, Counselor, Humanitarian*, so that I could understand the beginnings of that institute. Finally, Dr. Robert Lee, director of the Pocatello Institute adjacent to the Idaho State University, sent me some documents related to the history of the Pocatello Institute.

I want to acknowledge the cooperation of the administration and faculty in the Continuing Education Division of Santiago Canyon College in Orange, California, where I have taught for the last twenty-two years. During my doctoral studies I have received my colleagues' understanding and cooperation when I had to lighten my load of committee work and department duties so that I could focus on my studies and research. Their help and cooperation is recognized and appreciated.



At the end of May of this year, I had the opportunity to present a paper at the Mormon History Association national conference in St. George, Utah. While at the conference I met a doctoral student in Educational Leadership from Brigham Young University, Casey P. Griffiths. I was already acquainted with some of Casey's publications and I had used his master's thesis on Joseph F. Merrill in my research. My paper was on the contributions of J. Wyley Sessions to the church education system. Casey informed me of an article he had already published on the same topic, but more importantly, he told me about an oral interview that had been conducted in 1965 with J. Wyley Sessions. Casey graciously sent me his transcript of the interview along with permission to use it in my study; it added some significant details to the story of the founding of the first institute. I acknowledge Casey's willingness to share data.

At the same conference I became reacquainted with another graduate student, Brett Dowdle, who had just completed in April his Master of Arts at BYU in the history department. I had met Brett a year previously at the Church History Library. At that time I discovered that he was looking at the beginning of the entire Mormon supplementary religious education movement—including the Religion Class program, the Seminary program, and the Institute program. He shared with me his thesis; again, I acknowledge his contribution to my understanding of the same movement. My emphasis is just on the Institute portion of the LDS supplementary religious education movement.

While conducting my research for this study, it occurred to me that I had met a Jay Sessions while I was an undergraduate at Brigham Young University. It seemed to be a long shot, but I thought that with his name that somehow he must be related to J. Wyley

Sessions, a key figure in my dissertation. I worked through the BYU Alumni Association and was able to contact Jay. It turns out that he is the grandson of J. Wyley Sessions. From that initial contact that I made with Jay, I have received some valuable information from the Sessions family in addition to what is in the J. Wyley Sessions Papers in Special Collections at BYU. I want to acknowledge their help and cooperation in sharing documents and information for my research.

I acknowledge the assistance and help that I have received from these many contributors. There are probably others who have helped me on this path, and to them I extend my appreciation as well. While acknowledging assistance from so many contributors, I alone can take the responsibility for the content of this study with its insights and well as its possible flaws.

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

A History of the Founding of the Institutes of Religion, 1926-1936: A Case Study of a Religious Education Movement in American Higher Education

by

Terry Lyn Tomlinson

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Education  
University of California, Riverside, December, 2011  
Dr. Margaret Nash, Chairperson

This study examines the founding of the Institutes of Religion, a supplementary religious education movement designed for college students sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). In 1926 the first Institute of Religion was founded at the University of Idaho in Moscow. The study examines the socio-cultural milieu of American society from 1910 through 1920, a period in which the Progressive Movement attempted to reform society. The leaders of the LDS Church were concerned with the ills of society. To help its youth, the Church expanded its private school system and emphasized its religious education programs. The next decade, 1920-1929, brought even greater concerns for the Church leaders. With the “revolution of morals and manners,” they took steps to curb what they perceived as evil influences on youth and the corrupting influences upon their moral values. Two of the LDS Church’s major concerns were the secularization of American society and higher education with its accompanying decline in religious faith and activity; the second concern was the increase

of hedonism and materialism, which I am framing as worldliness. Another factor was the financial status of the Church and the economic recession that began in the 1920s. The Church leaders realized that they could no longer support their system of private secondary schools, the stake academies. They abandoned secular education below the college level and focused their resources on supplementary religious education programs. It was more cost effective to divest themselves of the academies and replace them with Institutes of Religion near college campuses. I trace the establishment of the first five institutes, illustrating how the movement evolved during its first decade, 1926-1936. This case study examines how at the local level the University of Idaho, in Moscow and Pocatello, the Utah State Agricultural College in Logan, the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, each reacted to the presence of the Institute. It examines how each Institute adapted to the socio-cultural context of each town and university.

## Table of Contents

|                   |   |     |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Abstract          |   | x   |
| Table of Contents |   | xii |
| Chapter One       | Introduction and Overview   | 1   |
| Chapter Two       | An Overview of Latter-day Saint Education, 1830-1920                                    | 50  |
| Chapter Three     | The Founding of the First Institute of Religion at the University of Idaho, Moscow      | 94  |
| Chapter Four      | A Brief History of the Establishment of the Next Four Institutes of Religion, 1928-1935 | 199 |
| Chapter Five      | Summary and Conclusions   | 287 |
| Bibliography      |   | 304 |

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

- “Here was a new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, through a reverie of long days and nights; destined finally to go out into that dirty grey turmoil to follow love and pride; a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken. . . .”  
--F. Scott Fitzgerald, novelist, 1920.
- “By the early Twenties, American churchmen were embarrassed when they recalled their blessing on the declaration of war in 1917 and their promise of the wonders that victory would bring. The crisis of belief that created a million agnostics and 10 million doubting fellow travelers washed over all denominations, trickling down into the cracks appearing in a society under strain.”  
--Geoffrey Perrett, historian, 1982.
- “. . . the Latter-day Saints are sincere believers in the value to their young people of an educational training. They believe in schools and are ready cheerfully to make sacrifices, if need be, to establish and maintain them. They believe not only in a training in secular subjects, but also in a religious education. . . . the Church has organized a system of week-day religious instruction that functions for all grades of school from the kindergarten to the college.”  
--Joseph F. Merrill, LDS Church Commissioner of Education, 1929.

### Introduction

At the beginning of the 1920s the United States had just fought in a World War, the “war to end all wars.” Americans were tired of the involvement with Europe and disheartened with the consequences of getting involved in world affairs. They were ready to return to “normalcy,” whatever that could mean after the flurry of events of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Earlier in the century on the domestic scene, the Progressives had tried with some success to reform the major institutions of society: schools, the work place, and politics. Now that war was over, it was time for Americans

to look inward rather than outward. Certainly social and personal interests were more important than international ones. Many Americans chose to take an “inward journey” and explored the inner world of dreams as introduced to them by Sigmund Freud in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Others became enamored with the theories of behaviorism developed by Dr. John B. Watson, which became the guide to child-rearing for the next two decades. For many Americans, the World War had created a “crisis of belief.”<sup>1</sup> Journalist Frederick Lewis Allen believed that this crisis was due to the sense of disillusionment from the Great War; he concluded that Americans felt “that life was futile and nothing mattered much.”<sup>2</sup> The loss of 114,000 Americans who died in just under a year of fighting was the gruesome reality of the human cost for Americans of the war.<sup>3</sup> Some Americans reacted to this crisis of belief by turning to atheism and agnosticism while others simply became apathetic in their belief in God. A vocal minority turned to Christian Fundamentalism, a back-to-basics religious movement that appealed to some Christians for its emotional fervor and its emphasis on the infallibility of the Bible.<sup>4</sup>

### **Statement of the Principal Research Question**

It was in this complex and convoluted milieu of the 1920s that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter the Church, or LDS Church)<sup>5</sup> began a

---

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Perrett, *America in the Twenties: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 197.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's* (New York: Harper & Row, 1931), 67.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart Robson, *The First World War*, ed. Clive and Gordon Martel Emsley, Seminar Studies in History (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 87.

<sup>4</sup> Perrett, *America in the Twenties*. See especially Chapter 8, “Modern Is as Modern Does,” pp. 147-165.

<sup>5</sup> “Style Guide--The Name of the Church,” from the official website of the Church, <http://newsroom.lds.org/style-guide>. The “Style Guide” suggests the use of the full name of the Church on

postsecondary religious educational movement. According to one cultural historian, “Historians have long recognized that, for better or worse, American culture was remade in the 1920’s.”<sup>6</sup> The three quotations preceding the introduction are representative of that era. Fitzgerald’s quote from *This Side of Paradise* are the words of the novel’s protagonist, Amory Blaine. At the conclusion of the novel he is completely disillusioned by society and concludes that the new generation has nothing to face, but to “find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken . . . .” Geoffrey Perrett, a historian of the 1920s, reflects that same feeling of despair and calls it the “crisis of belief.” But for the Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education, Joseph F. Merrill, the 1920s was an era of success, for the Church had established week-day religious education to supplement the secular training or instruction for students from kindergarten to college.

The college educational movement originally started with the name of “collegiate seminary,”<sup>7</sup> but it was later changed to the Institute of Religion. In this dissertation, I have asked and answered this basic research question: how and why did this postsecondary religious education movement begin in the 1920s? I have traced the origins of this movement from its humble beginnings at the University of Idaho where classes were first held in 1927 with fifty-seven students enrolled. Today, the Institute of Religion Movement (IRM) has evolved and grown into an international educational

---

the first reference, "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," and the use of "the Church" or "the Church of Jesus Christ" in further references. I will try to conform to the suggested guidelines.

<sup>6</sup> Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph F. Merrill, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928," in *Sessions, James Wyley (1895-1977)* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church History Library and Archives, 1928), 1.



program that now has an estimated enrollment of nearly 350,000 students at more than 2,500 institutions throughout the world.<sup>8</sup>

Originally, the Institute of Religion was a week-day religious education program sponsored by the Church for students attending colleges and universities. It attempted to provide the religious and spiritual education that by law tax-supported colleges and universities could not provide students. It was meant to be a supplementary educational program to a student's secular education; it presented classes in the history of the Bible, history of religion, theology, human development and family relations, as well as church administration.

In my dissertation I have presented the beginnings of the IRM from 1926 and traced its development as the first five Institutes of Religion were established. After the first one was created at the University of Idaho, the Church established the second one in 1928 in Logan, Utah, near the Utah Agricultural College (now Utah State University). The third Institute was established at Pocatello, Idaho, at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho (now Idaho State University) in 1929. In 1930 the fourth Institute was created near the headquarters of the Church in Salt Lake City at the University of Utah. The fifth Institute was established outside the intermountain area in the fall of 1935 at the University of Southern California. One of the major purposes of this dissertation is to narrate the history of how each of these institutes was created and to relate the social, cultural, historical, and religious milieu in which the institutes were established.

---

<sup>8</sup> "Institute of Religion: Frequently Asked Questions," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <http://institute.lds.org/faq/>.

## **The Central Historical Questions of the Study**

The central historical questions that I have investigated are: (1.) how did the IRM get started—what was the milieu or socio-cultural context at its establishment? (2.) With the creation of the next four Institutes in Utah, Idaho, and California, what was the socio-cultural context of the town and university of each of these subsequent Institutes? (3.) How did secularization play out in the five universities where Institutes were established? What place did the universities find for the Latter-day Saint religious education program? In answering these historical questions, my study sheds further light on how The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reacted to their perception of increased secular influences, and what effects the Institute program had on the secular university.

## **What Is Known about the IRM?**

In this section, I trace the historiographical record about the IRM. Up to this point, there has been one major type of research conducted by instructors and administrators who have been employed by the Institute program. I consider these researchers to be insiders because of their direct involvement with the program. Their perspective is that of professional educators who viewed the IRM through the lens of educational administration or curriculum and instruction. Their topics dealt with administrative behavior, administrative organization, program effectiveness, objectives and functions, changes in policy, and the student reactions to curriculum. There have been two centers for the research from the perspective of these insiders: Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles,

California.<sup>9</sup> Other studies written by employees of the Institute system have been written at various other universities, including the University of California, Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Utah, Stanford University, and the University of Missouri-Columbia.<sup>10</sup> This entire body of work was written from an educational frame of reference and not from a historical one; most of their research has been quantitative, using a questionnaire or survey and quantifying responses and opinions. None of these researchers explored the historical milieu of the founding of the IRM. This demonstrates that a gap exists in the literature that deals specifically with the origins of the IRM and the social, cultural, and religious milieu at the founding of the IRM written from the perspective of educational history.

---

<sup>9</sup> At Brigham Young University, the following dissertations have been written on the IRM: LeRoy I. Jorgensen, "A Study of Student Reaction to the Curriculum in the Institutes of Religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (A Report of a Field Project, Brigham Young University, 1965). Also, A. Gary Anderson, "A Historical Survey of the Full-Time Institutes of Religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1926-1966" (Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1968). At the University of Southern California, the following dissertations have been written on the IRM: Paul Harold Dunn, "An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Latter-day Saint Institutes of Religion" (Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1959); Frank W Bradshaw, "The Administrative Organization of the Latter-day Saints Institutes of Religion" (Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1966); Joseph Marvin Higbee, "Objectives and Functions of the Latter-day Saints Institutes of Religion" (Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1966). Dean Jarman, "Requirements of Effective Administrative Behavior in the Latter-day Saints Institutes of Religion" (Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1966).

<sup>10</sup> Milton Lynn Bennion, *Mormonism and Education* (Salt Lake City, UT: Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with the Deseret News Press, 1939). This dissertation was published in book form, *Mormonism and Education* (Salt Lake City, UT: Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with the Deseret News Press, 1939). At the University of California, Los Angeles, Royal Ruel Meservy, "A Historical Study of Changes in Policy of Higher Education in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1966). At the University of Utah, Ronald Thomas Daly, "Student Programs Sponsored by Religious Groups in Cooperation with Institutions of Higher Learning" (Thesis University of Utah, 1964). At Stanford University, Wilford Woodruff Richards, "A Study of the Contributions in Personal Guidance Made by the Logan Latter-day Saints Institute of Religion to the Students of the Utah State Agricultural College," Leland Stanford Junior University. At the University of Missouri-Columbia, John Lessing Fowles, "A Study Concerning the Mission of the Week-Day Religious Educational Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1890-1990: A Response to Secular Education" (Dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1990).

A second type of research, hardly a major type because of its paucity, was written from a historical perspective. In the preliminary stages of my research I found only one article, written by Leonard J. Arrington, which exemplifies this type of research. It was published in 1967 to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the first Institute of Religion and appeared in the newly created journal, *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*.<sup>11</sup> Arrington narrated the founding of the first Institute of Religion on the campus of the University of Idaho in the city of Moscow. Among all the studies completed about the IRM to date, this is the only article written by a professionally trained historian using historically-grounded methodology, thus providing me an opportunity to contribute a history about this movement.

Arrington claimed that to be able to understand the founding of the Institute program it is necessary to recall the intellectual climate surrounding the colleges and universities of the 1920s. He argued that this period was “marked by the rising reputation of science and a decline in the influence and power of the churches.”<sup>12</sup> With this ascendancy of science, Arrington asserted that religious leaders reacted in two different ways. The first reaction he called “irresponsible” and used the example of Fundamentalists making denunciations of “Godless” scientists. To institutionalize this reaction, some church leaders called for state legislatures to pass laws prohibiting the teaching of organic evolution and other new scientific theories. According to Kathleen Drowne and Patrick Huber, “Between 1921 and 1922, legislatures in 20 states introduced

---

<sup>11</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, "The Founding of the L.D.S. Institutes of Religion," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 2 (1967): 137-47.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

bills banning the teaching of evolution in public schools.”<sup>13</sup> In Tennessee the Butler Act passed in 1924 made it unlawful to “teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.”<sup>14</sup> In violation of the Butler Act, John Scopes, a high school biology teacher, was the litigant in the famous trial featuring the opposing lawyers Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan.

The second reaction Arrington typified as more “effective” and consisted of the “spread of ‘Religious Foundations’ at the university level.”<sup>15</sup> He argued that the purpose of these foundations was “to persuade intellectuals of the validity of the Church’s message” and to provide “for religious instruction and study at a level fully commensurate with that in the secular departments of the universities.”<sup>16</sup> This article is the only source that makes the connection of the IRM with that of the spread of the “Religious Foundations” on university campuses.

Dr. Dennis A. Wright, a professor of Church History and an Associate Dean of Religious Education at Brigham Young University, wrote an article published in 2009 on the first Institute of Religion.<sup>17</sup> While the article is written from a historical perspective, Wright’s training is not in history, but in special education. Although he is employed by the Church, through Brigham Young University, the article does not fit the typical pattern

---

<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Drowne, and Patrick Huber, *The 1920s*, ed. Ray B. Browne, American Popular Culture Through History (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 21.

<sup>14</sup> Perrett, *America in the Twenties*: 199.

<sup>15</sup> Arrington, "Founding the L.D.S. Institutes of Religion," 140.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 139-40.

<sup>17</sup> Dennis A. Wright, "The Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion at Moscow, Idaho," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 65-84.

of the professional educator, as described above; rather, it offers some important insights into the beginnings of the Moscow Institute. Dr. Wright attended that Institute as an undergraduate for three years, and when he learned the original building that he attended was going to be razed and replaced, “he made a mental note to come back someday and learn more about its history.”<sup>18</sup> His article provides important details about the role of William C. Geddes in the creation of the first institute and the details about the Church’s struggles in purchasing the land near the university, but he does not refer to the socio-cultural milieu and its effect on the first institute. I argue that Wright’s article adds important details to the founding of the first Institute, but it does not fill the gap that I fill with this dissertation.

### **Significance of the Study**

I have summarized the two types of research conducted up until now on the IRM. While these authors have written about different topics, my study is unique because it focuses on the origins of the movement and relates the milieu of the times to explain why it started and when it did. Therefore, my study makes an original contribution to the history of higher education. Additionally, the study partially answers the challenge to research the schools sponsored by religious groups outside the mainstream of Christian denominations issued in 1991 by historian F. Michael Perko. He admonished historians of education that “certain denominations and types of institutions that have been ignored

---

<sup>18</sup> Sharon Haddock, "First Institute of Religion Rooted in Faith: A Father's Concern for Daughters Led to Building," *Mormon Times*, August 28, 2010, 1.

ought to become the subject of historical inquiry.”<sup>19</sup> He went on to specify that “there has been little research on schools sponsored by the Seventh Day Adventists, Nazarenes, Churches of Christ, Assemblies of God, and Mormons, to cite only a few examples.”<sup>20</sup> This study into the IRM offers insights into a religious educational program that has generally been ignored by educational historians.

### **My Conceptual Framework**

Before reviewing the pertinent literature related to my central historical questions, first I explain the conceptual framework for my study. The heart of my inquiry connects the milieu of American society as the context for understanding the emergence of the IRM. Initially, as I began to research the topic, I immediately encountered the concept of secularization or secularism. In general terms, secularization deals with the decline of religious influence in society and replaces it with an emphasis on science or other nonreligious influences. Thomas O’Dea, a Catholic sociologist, first introduced me to the possible connection between the IRM and secularism. He asserted in his study on Mormonism that “The church maintains a Department of Education, which carries on . . . the institutes and seminaries that the church has erected and maintained next to colleges, junior colleges, and high schools throughout the intermountain West. The church has used these to meet the threat of secularism in education.”<sup>21</sup> From his sociological analysis, O’Dea saw a direct correlation between the creation of the religious educational

---

<sup>19</sup> F. Michael Perko, S. J., "Religious Higher Education in America: An Historiographic Survey," in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, ed. John C. Smart (1991), 440.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas F O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 183.

programs formed by the Church and the growing secularism. Furthermore, he argued that “perhaps Mormonism’s greatest and most significant problem is its encounter with modern secular thought.”<sup>22</sup> Mormon historian Richard Poll concurred with O’Dea; Poll asserted that the Church began the Institutes of Religion in 1926 with the “ultimate purpose . . . to build and maintain the faith of Mormon students in the face of secular challenges of the modern world.”<sup>23</sup> Two authors, writing a history of Brigham Young University, claim that the “founding of Brigham Young Academy [eventually to become Brigham Young University] thus represented a conservative reaction to the national trend towards secularized education.”<sup>24</sup> Using this concept of secularization, I have discovered its main was with the Latter-day Saint educational leaders. Specifically, Joseph F. Merrill, who was serving as the Commissioner of Church Education in 1928 when the curriculum was being designed for the first classes, articulated the main objectives of the Institute program. His encounter with secularization while a graduate student at the University of Michigan and at Johns Hopkins made him aware of its influence and how to help college students deal with it. Below, I will present an expanded definition of secularization and review the pertinent literature that connects it to the emergence of the IRM.

Closely related to the effects of institutionalized secularization, is a second concept that was part of the tapestry of the social fabric of the American university in the 1920s, a type of behavior and philosophy that I am calling “worldliness” that emphasized

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>23</sup> Richard D. Poll, ed. *Utah's History* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1989), 621.

<sup>24</sup> Gary James Bergera, and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1985), 2.



pleasure-seeking, materialism, and hedonism over scholarship and learning. While it can be argued that worldliness exists merely in the eye of the beholder, nevertheless, whether as perception or reality, during the 1920s there were many observers who claimed that the American university manifested worldliness in numerous ways.

From the perspective of the Latter-day Saints, worldliness is a viewpoint that emphasizes earthly pleasures, or “pleasures of the flesh,” over the importance of the “soul” or spiritual matters of life. One Mormon author, who at one time was a member of the Council of the Twelve—the second highest leadership council in the Church, defines a worldly perspective as one in which human society is guided by “the social conditions created by . . . the inhabitants of the earth . . . [who] live carnal, sensuous, lustful lives, . . .”<sup>25</sup> When Brigham Young was serving as the president of the Church, he issued this warning to Church members about the nature of the world:

“We must remember that we live in a world of sin, wickedness, and sorrow, and that the enemy of all righteousness is ever on the alert to destroy the Saints and lead them into temptation, darkness, sin and transgression.”<sup>26</sup>

I investigated the proposition that the perception and concern about the existing worldliness that was manifested in America’s colleges and universities was one of the factors in the decision of the LDS Church leadership to begin a religious educational program to counteract such worldliness. I will review the literature regarding worldliness in a later section of this chapter.

---

<sup>25</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), 847.

<sup>26</sup> Gary James Bergera, *Statements of the L.D.S. First Presidency: A Topical Compendium* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2007), 514.

A final construct that makes up the conceptual framework of this study was the desire to maintain a sense of “orthodoxy” among the university students who were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. James Davidson and Gary Quinn help define the term: “The word ‘orthodox’ etymologically has the double meaning of ‘right opinion’ or ‘right belief’ on the one hand and ‘right glory’ or ‘right worship’ on the other.”<sup>27</sup> They explain how various religious groups take different approaches to orthodoxy. For example, some churches emphasize religious worship, while others may stress doctrine. In Judaism, orthodoxy is “a reference to certain groups of Jews who are distinguished from other groups on the basis of their attitudes toward the modern world and their manner of practicing the Torah.”<sup>28</sup> Usually the term “orthodox” in Judaism refers to the more rigid traditionalists who follow a strict interpretation of obedience to the Torah.

While the LDS Church does not have any officially designated “orthodox tradition” as contrasted to a “reformed tradition,” nevertheless there are degrees of orthodoxy exhibited by Church members. From a Latter-day Saint viewpoint, orthodox describes a member who believes in the tenets and doctrines, who practices the ordinances, who actively participates in the meetings and activities of the Church, and who does volunteer work by accepting a “calling” in the Church. In an address in general conference in 1922, Stephen L. Richards, an important Church leader, addressed the issue of being orthodox. He told the congregation, “I am orthodox; I am proud to be

---

<sup>27</sup> James D. Davidson, and Gary J. Quinn, "Theological and Sociological Uses of the Concept 'Orthodoxy'," *Review of Religious Research* 18, no. 1 (1976): 74.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

orthodox.”<sup>29</sup> He interpreted his orthodoxy as being “correct or sound in doctrine; holding the commonly accepted faith.”<sup>30</sup> He criticized those members of the Church who claimed membership in the organization, but would add this phrase, “but I don’t pretend to be orthodox.”<sup>31</sup> From his perspective, he did not perceive his orthodoxy as being restrictive; he claimed, “and when I say I am orthodox, I do not, for one moment, contemplate a situation in which I am not receptive to all good new thought, to the development of true science, and to the extension of the application of the principles of the gospel . . . to all circumstances which may arise in life.”<sup>32</sup> In terminology used by Latter-day Saints, an orthodox member is considered an “active” member; it is equivalent to what Judaism calls “observant” and Roman Catholics call a “practicing” member.

Historian Jan Shippo,<sup>33</sup> a life-long Methodist yet a specialist on Mormon History, has written about Mormon orthodoxy. From her point of view, there exist seven categories along what she calls a “belief-behavior continuum,”<sup>34</sup> a type of “orthodoxy continuum.”<sup>35</sup> At one extreme are the persons who consider themselves as the only “orthodox” Mormons, the Mormon “fundamentalists.” They continue to practice plural

---

<sup>29</sup> Stephen L. Richards, "Two Different Views," *Conference Report*, October 1922, 65.

<sup>30</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Being Orthodox," *Conference Report*, April 1935, 29.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>32</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Two Different Views," 65.

<sup>33</sup> Richard L. Bushman, a devout member of the LDS Church and the author of a 2005 biography of Joseph Smith, wrote this about Jan Shippo: "No one is better qualified to comment on the state of Mormon history than Jan Shippo. Not only has she been an observer of the Mormon historiographical scene for half a century; she has been one of the most vigorous and influential participants. See Richard Lyman Bushman, "What's New in Mormon History: A Response to Jan Shippo," *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 2 (2007): 517.

<sup>34</sup> Jan Shippo, "Beyond the Stereotypes: Mormon and Non-Mormon Communities in Twentieth-Century Mormondom," in *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, ed. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1987), 348.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

marriage and as such they are not considered members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints which announced officially in 1890 that faithful members were no longer to enter into plural marriages. A second group is what Shipps calls the “active, superorthodox Saints.”<sup>36</sup> They accept the canonized history of the Church without question and exhibit a high level of activity in the Church and are heavily involved with Church callings. A third group of members accept the truth of the LDS Church and generally are active; at the same time, they may be active in “quasi-official LDS organizations such as Mormon History Association of the various Sunstone symposia.”<sup>37</sup> Persons in the fourth group, which fits in the central category of Mormonism, have been at one time immersed in the Mormon doctrine but currently are not taking an active role in the Church. Sometimes these are called “cultural” or “ethnic” Mormons.

The last three groups of Mormons are characterized as harboring varying degrees of hostility towards the Church—in the fifth group, mild hostility, and persons of this group are commonly called “Jack Mormons;” the sixth group, known as well as “Jack Mormons,” but they possess a high level of hostility towards the Church, usually because they have been disfellowshipped (the member’s name remains on the records of the Church and is still considered a member but has restrictions as to participation) or excommunicated (the member’s name is removed from the Church records and is restricted from any participation or privileges); the last group, the seventh group, are extremely antagonistic towards the Church and can be categorized as “anti-Mormon.”

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 349.

They demonstrate their hostility by “denigrating Mormon theology and opposing the LDS Church and its authority in the community.”<sup>38</sup>

Sociologists of religion, Stan Albrecht and Howard Bahr, add this insight into what constitutes an “active” Mormon: “To be an ‘active’ Mormon requires relatively high commitment of time, money, and energy to church-related programs.”<sup>39</sup> From the perspective of the leadership of the Church, one of the most important purposes of the Church Education System, of which the IRM is part, is to help students maintain their orthodoxy. As one Mormon educator noted, “Their aim [of Latter-day Saint educational programs] is to promote faithful adherence to the Mormon religion—an aim shared by many other religious educational institutions and not, of course, uniquely Mormon.”<sup>40</sup> This implies that the educational programs will “reinforce the teachings and values of the Mormon Church and the Mormon family.”<sup>41</sup>

Within the concepts of secularization found in the university, the perception of worldliness in campus life, and the desire to maintain orthodoxy of Latter-day Saint students, a historian of education can make a strong case for investigating the IRM further. The intersection and interaction of these three concepts: secularization, worldliness, and orthodoxy, have helped me frame the research questions of this study.

## **Historiographical Review of the 1920s**

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Stan L. Albrecht, and Howard M. Bahr, "Patterns of Religious Disaffiliation: A Study of Lifelong Mormons, Mormon Converts, and Former Mormons," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22, no. 4 (1983): 551.

<sup>40</sup> Frederick S. Buchanan, "Mormon Response to Secular Education," *Religious Education* 81, no. 4 (1986): 651-52.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

To analyze and explain the milieu of American society at the founding of the IRM requires a basic understanding of the historical events and context of the 1920s. My purpose in this section is to explore the main arguments from the key sources relating to that decade. First, it is essential to obtain a perspective on the demographics in higher education, including the approximate numbers of college-aged people at the time. For this data, I am relying upon David E. Kyvig's *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939: Decades of Promise and Pain*.<sup>42</sup> Based on the 1920 census, the median age for the entire United States population was twenty-five, an age that could have possibly been within the purview of higher education. The fifteen to twenty-four year olds, the age group eligible to attend secondary schooling and higher education, accounted for 19.6 percent of the population. This is significant for my study because it was a contributing factor by churches on university campuses to attempt to meet the needs of the increased number of students in higher education. Demographics in the United States made it possible for a potentially larger percentage of young people to attend college, a growth trend that had continued since the Civil War.<sup>43</sup>

The historiography of the 1920s was first reviewed and summarized in 1956 by historian Henry F. May under the title of "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920s."<sup>44</sup> Advisedly, May refers to the historiography of the 1920s as "shifting," for that decade

---

<sup>42</sup> David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939: Decades of Promise and Pain*, Greenwood Press "Daily Life Through History" Series (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

<sup>43</sup> John R Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 205. Thelin documents a substantial growth from less than 5 percent of Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty attending college in 1917 up to 15 percent attending by 1937.

<sup>44</sup> Henry F. May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43, no. 3 (1956).

has been portrayed from a range of differing perspectives. One of the earliest impressions of the Twenties came from Frederick Lewis Allen and his “informal history,” *Only Yesterday*. This history was published within one year of the close of the decade (1931) and in it Allen attempted to weave events and circumstances of the 1920s into “a pattern which at least masquerades as history.”<sup>45</sup> His purpose was “to tell, and in some measure to interpret, the story of what in the future may be considered a distinct era in American history.” He recognizes that as a journalist who lived and wrote about the twenties when the events were occurring, this informal history was written from “close range” which Allen feels gave him a “special opportunity to record the fads and fashions and follies of the time, the things which millions of people thought about and talked about and became excited about and which at once touched their daily lives; . . .”<sup>46</sup> Nonetheless, Allen is able to reveal what he calls the “fundamental trends in our national life and national thought during the nineteen-twenties.”<sup>47</sup> I have used Allen’s history to obtain a sense of the times with regards to social, cultural, historical, and religious themes of American society.

Specifically, Allen’s chapter on “The Revolution in Manners and Morals” is quite informative because he shows how American society was turning away from the Victorian moral code; Allen contends that the twenties was a “first-class revolt against the accepted American order [the American moral code].”<sup>48</sup> In addition, Allen’s chapter on “The Ballyhoo Years” provides evidence that religion had lost ground in the post-war

---

<sup>45</sup> Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's*: x.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

decade and that “something spiritual had gone out of the churches—a sense of certainty that theirs was the way to salvation.”<sup>49</sup> He also makes the case that the “credo of the intellectuals” during this period held that religious skepticism was the vogue and they were “content quietly to stay away from church.”<sup>50</sup> Allen’s work is evidence that something was happening in American society that appeared to be a decline in the influences of churches (a form of secularization), and the revolt against the American moral code could be viewed as a type of “worldliness.” Both trends were interpreted by religious leaders as something to take note of and to be concerned about.

Writing some three decades after Allen, William E. Leuchtenburg described American society in his volume, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32*. This history, in many ways, echoed the observations and conclusions made by Allen in 1931. Like Allen, Leuchtenburg’s work contains a chapter dealing with the revolt of Americans against their moral legacy; Leuchtenburg entitles his chapter “The Revolution in Morals.” He contends that in this period there occurred a “disintegration of traditional American values . . . [that] was reflected in a change in manners and morals that shook American society to its depths.”<sup>51</sup> As an essential part of that revolt, Leuchtenburg feels that the “growing secularization of the country greatly weakened religious sanctions.”<sup>52</sup> His point on secularization gives credence to the use of the concept of secularization to understand the emergence of the IRM. .

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>51</sup> William E Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32*, ed. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Chicago History of American Civilization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 158.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



While Allen and Leuchtenburg follow a similar format, in 1982 Geoffrey Perrett published his history of the 1920s.<sup>53</sup> His objective in writing about that decade was to “provide the first complete account” of the Twenties by filling in the missing gaps utilizing the sources that Allen did not have at his disposal in 1931.<sup>54</sup> Of particular interest to my research is his chapter on “Modern Is as Modern Does,” a look at the influence of psychology, psychotherapy, the sexual revolution, “the new female,” and abortion rights issue on American views and values. Perrett’s social history offers me evidence to connect the changes in American society with interpretations of worldliness. A second chapter on “That Old-Time Religion” deals with the currents of religious thought, the rise of fundamentalism, the rise of charismatic preachers, and the decline in mainstream denominations. This latter I am classifying as a type of secularization, using the criteria of historian George M. Marsden.<sup>55</sup> These two chapters are of greatest interest in my connecting American society with the rise of college religious educational movements.

A decade after the publication of Perrett’s history of the 1920s, Michael E. Parrish published his work on the 1920s and 1930s in *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1941*. One of Parrish’s greatest strengths is his emphasis on social history, focusing on the everyday events, and especially the effects of a consumer-oriented economy that “profoundly affected the physical welfare and moral sensibilities

---

<sup>53</sup> Perrett, *America in the Twenties*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>55</sup> George M Marsden, "The Soul of the American University: A Historical Overview," in *The Secularization of the Academy*, ed. George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, *Religion in American Series* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 16.

of men, women, and children from all walks of life in every region of the United States.”<sup>56</sup> Parrish asserts that it was the consumer society with its strong marketing and advertising that “threatened to become for many the chief preoccupation of daily life, a virtual secular religion.”<sup>57</sup>

A second contribution to the historiography of the 1920s is Parrish’s interpretation of religion and its effects upon society. Allen claims in his history that after the “Post-war Decade” the church statistics showed “a very slow growth in the number of churches in use.”<sup>58</sup> As far as church attendance, Allen argued that “On actual attendance at services there were no reliable figures, although it was widely believed that an increasing proportion of nominally faithful were finding other things to do on Sunday morning.”<sup>59</sup> Allen’s conclusion about religion is summarized by a quote from Walter Lippman that “people were not so certain that they were going to meet God when they went to church.”<sup>60</sup> Parrish is more specific in his analysis of religion than Allen. Parrish contends that church membership continued rising in the 1920s, a trend that had started from the beginning of the century, reaching about one-half of the adult population by 1930.<sup>61</sup> The greatest gains were not in the mainstream denominations, but rather with fundamentalists who would not compromise with the religious modernists who wanted to accept the compatibility of science and religion. Parrish illustrates the power of the

---

<sup>56</sup> Michael E Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1941*, ed. General Editor John Morton Blum, The Norton Twentieth Century America Series (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), x.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's*: 169.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>61</sup> Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depress, 1920-1941*: 131.

fundamentalists by referring to the ministries of the Reverend Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson.<sup>62</sup> As with Allen, Leuchtenburg, and Perrett, I am using Parrish's assessment of American culture as examples of worldliness and secularization.

### **The Decade of the 1920s as Viewed through the Lens of Religion**

I now turn my attention to a group of sources that sheds light on the milieu of American society that views it through the lens of religion, but more importantly, these researchers share similar views about the declining religious influence in American society. The first is Dean R. Hoge's *Commitment on Campus: Changes in Religion and Values over Five Decades*. His chapter entitled "Impressions of Changing Students Since 1900" is particularly valuable for my study. Hoge made observations about the religious attitudes of college students in the Twenties. At the beginning of the decade, there seemed to be a great interest in religion, a kind of "renaissance of religion" on the college campus.<sup>63</sup> Later in the same decade there appeared to be a "decrease" in student religious interest and participation; Hoge quotes one observer of the college religious scene in 1930, "without any question, religion is a real concern for very few college students."<sup>64</sup> Hoge concluded that it was during the years 1925 and 1926 that there was a wave of challenges to compulsory chapel on several campuses, resulting in several colleges liberalizing their policies regarding compulsory chapel. Hoge's data show how religious

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 132-34.

<sup>63</sup> Dean R. Hoge, *Commitment on Campus: Changes in Religion and Values over Five Decades* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 133.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 134.

influence declined on the college campus; more evidence that some type of secularization was taking place in higher education.

A second important source using the lens of religion is David P. Setran's *The College "Y": Student Religion in the Era of Secularization*. Setran's purpose is to "trace the organization's growth, influence, and changing orientation in the context of the broader changes in higher education."<sup>65</sup> For the purposes of my research, his chapter on "A Shrinking Sphere" which deals with the YMCA in the 1920s is the most relevant to my topic. He shows that with the great increase of students into higher education, which occurred during the 1920s, administrators began to realize the need to provide supervisory oversight in the extracurricular realm which provided "the best opportunity to shape the moral lives of students."<sup>66</sup> The universities became interested in the very activities that the YMCA had been engaged in all along; the universities took over these functions in what was to them a "consolidation" of functions. Denominational church movements (the RFM) then took over other functions that were once those of the Y, hence it lost influence from within and outside the university which resulted in "a shrinking sphere." Setran claims that the YMCA accelerated secularization by providing extracurricular religion on the nation's campuses and thereby "made it easier for professors and administrators to sanction institutional separation of facts and values in these settings."<sup>67</sup> The YMCA proved to be a source of secularization for both the educational institutions and for the students. Setran's conclusions provide specific

---

<sup>65</sup> David P. Setran, *The College "Y": Student Religion in the Era of Secularization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 8; *ibid.*

evidence for arguing that secularization had taken place and continued to occur in American universities in the 1920s.

A final source that uses the religious lens to view history is Alfred Lindsay Skerpan's dissertation entitled "A Place for God: Religion, State Universities, and American Society, 1865-1920."<sup>68</sup> He investigated the issue of religion at four state universities, two in the Northern states: the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin (Madison), and two in Southern states: the University of Georgia and the University of Texas. With each university, he looked at "their operations as institutions, the lives of their students, and the religious concerned with them."<sup>69</sup> He concluded that by 1920 all four of the universities had shifted from direct involvement with religion to "considerable disengagement from it [religion] as something mostly outside their province."<sup>70</sup> This resulted in religion ending up occupying little or no place in the education that students received at these four universities. Skerpan's conclusions that show the declining influence of religion in these four state colleges add weight to the argument that the institutionalized secularization continued to wield a strong influence in higher education throughout the 1920s.

### **The Decade of the 1920s as Viewed through the Lens of Worldliness**

Closely related to the religious conditions that existed in the 1920s is the concept of worldliness. In explaining the milieu of American society in the Twenties, this is an

---

<sup>68</sup> Alfred Lindsay Skerpan, "A Place for God: Religion, State Universities, and American Society, 1865-1920" (Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

appropriate juncture in which to further define, analyze, and review the literature concerning worldliness. This concept is linked to the Christian view of “this world” as opposed to the heavenly world referred to as the “kingdom of God” which many Christians interpret as “life eternal.”<sup>71</sup> On several occasions Jesus referred to “this world” as symbolic of the dwelling place of sinful man who had not been “saved” by accepting and following the teachings of the Master. Jesus told his apostles that he was “not of the world,” meaning this earthly dwelling place.<sup>72</sup> The apostle John refers to the process of being “born of God” as overcoming the world.<sup>73</sup> The apostle Paul refers to the “wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”<sup>74</sup> And James, another apostle, defines one of the roles for the Christian is to keep oneself “unspotted from the world,” keeping oneself free from earthly sins.<sup>75</sup> In Christian theology, “this world” symbolizes something carnal and sinful, and this connotation carries over into the concept of worldliness, the desire to seek worldly pleasures. Therefore, the concept of “worldliness” is used here as a preoccupation with earthly pleasures, rather than focusing on spiritual or religious matters. In the context of higher education, students focusing on worldliness would seek the pleasures of “student life” and its diversions, rather than focusing on the curriculum

---

<sup>71</sup> George T. Montague, (S. M.), *The Biblical Theology of the Secular* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Bruce Publishing Company, 1968), 40. See also “World,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1736-41.

<sup>72</sup> St. John 17:14 "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of he world, even as I am not of the world."

<sup>73</sup> 1 John 5:4 ""For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

<sup>74</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:19 "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness."

<sup>75</sup> James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

and scholarship or any religious matters. The literature on this concept is extensive, so this review will consider only the most important sources.<sup>76</sup>

Reference has already been made to Setran's work, but his documentation of worldliness and his framing of the worldliness issue support the argument of this study. Setran observes that "Students of the 'Roaring 20s' . . . were increasingly liberated from the moral strictures that had once anchored the Protestant conscience."<sup>77</sup> In this liberated state, students rebelled against the Victorian code of conduct and spent their time in college engaged in "student drinking, dancing, movie attendance, and sexual exploration . . ."<sup>78</sup> Setran argues that the students of the 1920s did not have the same interest in religion as did previous generations. He asserts that the student "moral rebellion" was only part of the problem; the students seemed to reject the YMCA's service orientation as well. He claims that this "new generation of collegians came to campus with a pragmatist, selfish, and materialist bent reflective of the broader society."<sup>79</sup> His research gives substance to the worldliness concept as one that had a great effect on students in college at that time. His portrayal of student life in the Twenties is evidence that worldliness was a factor in student behavior. Setran links secularization with worldliness. He argues that students were being influenced by a two prong approach: first, in the classroom professors were belittling organized religion and deprecating the Christian

---

<sup>76</sup> See Drowne, *The 1920s*. Lucy Rollin, *Twentieth-Century Teen Culture by the Decades: A Reference Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999). Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (New York: Viking, 2007). Joshua Zeitz, *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2006).

<sup>77</sup> Setran, *The College "Y": Student Religion in the Era of Secularization*: 186.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

point of view (a form of secularization); second, students were pursuing worldly pleasures of “wine, women, and song” in a type of moral rebellion (a form of worldliness).<sup>80</sup>

Lynn Dumenil’s interpretation of the 1920s is similar in many ways to that of Setran. Like Setran, she asserts that secularization was growing in the first decades of the twentieth century. With the expansion of secular influences, “religion was less important in the public arena of American life.”<sup>81</sup> In her chapter on “The New Woman,” she illustrates how a new morality had been adopted by many American women led by the working-class young women who were seeking “cheap amusements” and found them in the “new urban amusements—dance halls, amusement parks, theaters.”<sup>82</sup> Of course, these new amusements were unchaperoned and were relatively anonymous which led to more sexual experimentation.

Dumenil uses the “flapper” as the vibrant symbol of the new generation. The flapper turned to smoking, drinking, and cosmetics, originally associated only with prostitutes, as part of her statement of independence and rebellion. The new style of dancing to a new form of music, jazz, was “symbolic, another badge of their rejection of traditional standards of behavior.”<sup>83</sup> Traditionalists viewed these modern youth as “irresponsible, irreligious, and immoral.”<sup>84</sup> The “problem of wild, abandoned youth” was

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 130.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.



a topic that was ardently debated in the 1920s. Dumenil documents how young people sought worldly pleasures in music, dancing, drinking; the same activities documented by Setran. They both argue that many students of the 1920s were motivated by a spirit of worldliness to seek fun and pleasure.

The third source in this literature review is a cultural history of “college life” by historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz. Her focus is the subculture of undergraduates in American higher education, covering the 1920s in the chapter entitled “The Organized.” Her main thesis in this chapter is that college life offered American young people “the appropriate staging ground for adulthood.”<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, college life appealed especially to young men because “it allowed male adolescents the full expression of their youthful high spirits and their hedonism.”<sup>86</sup> The emphasis was on the present, offering students the “right to enjoy the here and now.” One of the “organized” institutions that gained power in the American college was that of the fraternity. Horowitz contends that “part of the strength of the Greek system was that it drew the richest and most worldly collegians.”<sup>87</sup> The members of these college fraternities enjoyed “student parties, bonfires, proms, and football, their life in college was undeniably fun.”<sup>88</sup> She summarizes the college life experience of these young men: “In the 1920s the pursuit of pleasure characterized the four years of the college man.”<sup>89</sup> This emphasis on the college campus of fun and the pursuit of pleasure seems to indicate a type of worldliness that existed on

---

<sup>85</sup> Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 119.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

the American college campus. Horowitz's findings corroborate the use of the concept of the pursuit of worldliness as a viable framing mechanism of my study.

Another source is Paula S. Fass's *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s*. Whereas Horowitz and Setran write on broader topics, Fass's history is focused specifically on the culture of America's young people in the Twenties. As indicated in her introduction, the student sample she studied were "native, white, middle-class, and almost exclusively college-going" youth.<sup>90</sup> Fass's major thesis is that "youth suddenly became a social problem in the 1920's."<sup>91</sup> She argues that the "youth problem" was connected to "changes in family nurture, education, sex roles, leisure habits, as well as social values and behavioral norms."<sup>92</sup> Fass asserts that "the manners, habits, and styles of youth all seemed to describe a new attitude which rejected traditional roles and norms."<sup>93</sup> She documented at least three manifestations of worldliness. First, she referred to the "outer signs" of appearance and clothing that caused alarm among traditionalists because they thought the clothing styles and the use of cosmetics by young women "made women appear cruder and purposefully solicitous of the rawer instincts of men."<sup>94</sup> Second, was the issue of smoking for women, drinking for both sexes, and dancing to jazz music. Many adults described the behavior of the youth who participated in these three activities as "defiant, raunchy, [and] implicitly sexual."<sup>95</sup> Finally, the issue of sexuality and sexual license was of greatest concern to traditionalists. They felt that the

---

<sup>90</sup> Fass, *American Youth in the 1920's*: 7.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

youthful sexuality symbolized “both disorder and rebellion: disorder because it meant energy unrestrained, and rebellion because it was the most obvious line of attack in the onslaught against the pretensions of prewar morality.”<sup>96</sup> Fass’s argument is that these perceived manifestations of worldliness were what caused the traditionalists to condemn the youth of the 1920s. For the purposes of the argument that I have developed in this study, Fass’s contribution strengthens it; this is further evidence that the spirit of pleasure seeking (worldliness) was one of the factors influencing college-aged students’ behavior.

Nicolas L. Syrett’s study of white college fraternities in the United States published in 2009 is the final source on worldliness. He purposefully chose the title, *The Company He Keeps*, because “fraternity men” believed that a man was known by the company he kept and it was for this reason that they have been so selective about whom they allow joining their fraternities. They also believed in the corollary that “a man’s character was shaped by the company he kept.”<sup>97</sup> Syrett wrote a chapter on the behavior of the fraternity men in the 1920s entitled “Fussers and Fast Women: Fraternity Men in the 1920s.” According to Syrett “fussers” were “socially active men” who participated in the fraternities.<sup>98</sup> He documents the behavior of these fraternity men who joined these social units which personified the “ultimate fulfillment of the collegiate ideal.”<sup>99</sup> Among the fraternity men, it was the athletes who “reigned supreme.” Without a doubt it was the athlete who ranked as the “big man in college.” Syrett documents the worldly behavior of

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>97</sup> Nicholas L. Syrett, *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities*, ed. Thadius M. Davis and Mary Kelly, *Gender and American Culture* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), xi.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 222.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 189.

the fraternity men; this included “excessive drunkenness,” “rowdiness,” hazing of their new members (a practice generally prohibited on most campuses), petting, and sexual conquests. One of the activities was a type of “sex as sport,” which was connected to “the ability to seduce a girl was explicitly linked to a man’s skill in so doing.”<sup>100</sup> Syrett concludes the chapter claiming that “It was in the twenties that it became popular . . . for young, middle-class men, fraternity brothers . . . to discuss their sexual exploits with each other.”<sup>101</sup> In this final source, there is plenty of evidence that worldliness was a significant force in the university milieu during the 1920s.

### **Higher Education Viewed through the Lens of Secularization**

My final research question deals with the concept of secularization and how it played out in the five universities where Institutes were established. Secularization is a concept that holds special interest for historians of higher education. For example, in his study on postsecondary education David Levine made this claim: “The secularization of the nation’s urban denominational institutions testifies to the transformation of American higher education in the early decades of the twentieth century.”<sup>102</sup> The same author argues that “education became the secular religion of twentieth-century American society.”<sup>103</sup> Hofstadter and Hardy assert that increasing secularization is one of the primary themes of American higher education: “There are several major themes that command the attention of the historian of American higher education, but among these

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>102</sup> David O Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 75.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 87.

the oldest and longest sustained is the drift toward secularization.”<sup>104</sup> They contrast the early American college that was founded by churchmen who possessed strong religious convictions with the modern university that is predominantly secular.

In this section, I define, analyze, and review the literature concerning secularization. According to sociologist Steve Bruce, “secularization is a multi-faceted notion which does not lend itself readily to definitive quantitative test.”<sup>105</sup> It is a concept studied, discussed, and debated by historians and sociologists; it is indeed a multi-faceted concept that can be quite complex. In attempting to define secularization, Larry Shiner’s article is helpful; he points out that the English word “secular” comes from the Latin *saeculum* which meant “a generation, or an age, or the spirit of an age.”<sup>106</sup> Later in the Middle Ages the term took on the meaning of “this world,” and finally it appeared in the seventeenth century as secularization, used to describe the transfer of lands from ecclesiastical to civil control. Eventually, it took on the connotation of an attitude of “indifference to religious institutions and practices of even to religious questions as such.”<sup>107</sup>

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to use historian George M. Marsden’s definition of the term: “By secularization I simply mean the removal of some

---

<sup>104</sup> Richard and Hardy Hofstadter, C. DeWitt, *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 3.

<sup>105</sup> Steve Bruce, ed. *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992; reprint, 2001), 9.

<sup>106</sup> Larry Shiner, "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6, no. 2 (1967): 208.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

activity of life from substantive influences of traditional or organized religion.”<sup>108</sup> From this general definition he specifies two types of secularization: first is “methodological secularization” which “takes place when, in order to obtain greater scientific objectivity or to perform a technical task, one decides it is better to suspend religious beliefs.”<sup>109</sup> Second is “ideological secularization” which he argued results in the “promise of the triumph of enlightened science, which would free humanity from superstition and metaphysics and enable society to follow a higher, scientifically derived morality.”<sup>110</sup> Peter Berger (a sociologist) defines secularization as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.”<sup>111</sup> Accompanying this “decline” of the religious influence upon society and culture is “the rise of science as an autonomous, thoroughly secular perspective on the world.”<sup>112</sup> Mark Chaves, also a sociologist, clarifies this “decline” of religious influence; he argues that “Secularization is best understood not as the decline of religion, but as the declining scope of religious authority.”<sup>113</sup> Steve Bruce reminds us that “secularization primarily refers to the beliefs of people.”<sup>114</sup> As such, it is more than just a theoretical construct; it is a personal matter of faith and belief. The decline in religion is in contrast to what Gauss calls the “predominant role” which religious groups played in the founding of many of our first colonial colleges. Gauss claims that “this religious orientation and

---

<sup>108</sup> Marsden, "Soul of the American University," 16.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>111</sup> Peter L Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 107.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," *Social Forces* 72, no. 3 (1994): 750.

<sup>114</sup> Bruce, *Religion and Modernization*, 6.

interest were important, if not dominant, in every American college founded before 1776.”<sup>115</sup> Christian Smith, a sociologist, claims that until the close of the nineteenth century “the vast majority of America’s hundreds of colleges were founded by religious denominations, governed by religious leaders, and guided by religious visions of knowledge and virtue.”<sup>116</sup>

The moral and religious orientation in education was continued as colleges and universities were founded before the Civil War. Tewksbury claims that “with the exception of a few state universities, practically all the colleges founded between the Revolution and the Civil War were organized, supported, and in most cases controlled by religious interests.”<sup>117</sup> In some cases, this religious character of higher education continued until the 1900s, but the twin goals of higher education inherited from the colonial colleges of “discipline” (meaning mental discipline learned from studying Greek, Latin, and mathematics) and “piety” (the inculcation of moral character in a religious context reinforced by reading the Bible and attending the compulsory chapel service) had lost their importance by the 1900s. Veysey concludes that by 1910 the American university had “been urbanized and secularized; only the churches themselves remained to be affected more or less, by the same process.”<sup>118</sup> Earl H. Brill, in his dissertation completed at the American University in 1969, arrived at the same

---

<sup>115</sup> Christian Gauss, ed. *The Teaching of Religion in American Higher Education* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1951), 3.

<sup>116</sup> Christian Smith, ed. *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003), 97.

<sup>117</sup> Donald G Tewksbury, *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities Before the Civil War: With Particular Reference to the Religious Influences Bearing Upon the College Movement* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1932; reprint, Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1965), 55.

<sup>118</sup> Laurence R Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago 1965), 56.

conclusion as Veysey and agreed with his choice of 1910 as a significant date. Brill argues:

By that time [1910], the major change from church college to secular university had been accomplished and, while the secularization process was not complete, the path of the future was marked out with some clarity.<sup>119</sup>

My literature review begins with Laurence R. Veysey's *The Emergence of the American University*. He contends that the American college became secularized while educational reformers were trying to replace the classical college educational goals of discipline and piety with "utility," "research," and "liberal culture." Veysey documents how university presidents, while religious believers themselves, as they were reforming their institutions did away with compulsory attendance at chapel services, instituted an "elective system" that tended to marginalize courses dealing with the Bible or moral philosophy, and elevated the value of science and research which had the tendency to deemphasize religion and piety. The end result was the secularized university. He asserts that the university reformers intentionally sought to secularize their institutions. Veysey quotes the words of a philosophy professor, expressing the chief aim of the university as "an intellectual one" and not "to make a man religious, political, moral, or aesthetic."<sup>120</sup> Veysey presents persuasive evidence that secularization did take place; he demonstrates with concrete examples how the universities eventually replaced Christian theology and practices with science and research.

---

<sup>119</sup> Earl Hubert Brill, "Religion and the Rise of the University: A Study of the Secularization of American Higher Education, 1870-1910" (Historical dissertation, The American University, 1970), 6.

<sup>120</sup> Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*: 209; *ibid.*



While Veysey's work is considered a classic, it is not the final word on the secularization of American higher education. In this section I review the works of three revisionist historians to clarify the secularization process. First is Julie A. Reuben's work, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality*.<sup>121</sup> Her thesis is that educational leaders at the premier research universities (she uses these eight: Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, University of Chicago, Stanford, University of Michigan, and University of California, Berkeley) advocated an education based on value-free science and "religion was relegated to the background."<sup>122</sup> Reuben takes exception with Veysey's interpretation in two ways: first, she questions his "tripartite division of university reform," (advocating utility, research, and liberal culture) because she shows that the university leaders believed in the unity of truth which promoted all three simultaneously. Second, Reuben challenges Veysey's assertion that the university reformers intentionally sought to secularize higher education; she argues that "university reformers continued to view piety and moral discipline as one of the aims of higher education, but wanted to replace older, authoritarian methods with new ones."<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, she asserts that religion disappeared from the university because the university reformers failed in their attempts to modernize religion by making it more compatible with science, not because they neglected religion.<sup>124</sup> From my reading of the two authors, while they disagree on how

---

<sup>121</sup> Julie A Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

secularization occurred, nevertheless the result was the same: the modern American research university, whether intentionally or unintentionally, had been secularized.

Next is George M. Marsden's book, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*.<sup>125</sup> Marsden argues that at America's most influential universities, while they were still under the liberal Protestant influence at the beginning of the 1900s, they excluded Christian belief as unworthy of study in the new orthodoxy of secularism. Marsden argues that "The reverence for scientific authority was the major intellectual manifestation of the new commitments."<sup>126</sup> Both methodological and ideological secularization crowded out the religious influences at the university: "The simple fact was that once a college expanded its vision to become a university and to serve a broad middle-class constituency, the days were numbered when any substantive denominational tradition could survive."<sup>127</sup> During the 1920s the predominant attitude of the students toward religion was "indifference." Marsden argues that secularization was the influence that turned the university into an institution classified as "nonsectarian," which he interprets as a code word today to mean "the exclusion of all religious concerns."<sup>128</sup> His persuasive arguments provide my study with further evidence that secularization had a strong effect on the modern American university.

---

<sup>125</sup> George M Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 440.

A final source, from a theology professor at Notre Dame, is James Tunstead Burtchaell's volume entitled *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches*.<sup>129</sup> He refers to a specific kind of secularization; he documents how denominational institutions of higher learning have "disengaged" from their founding Christian churches. He argues that the faculty "was the first constituency to lose interest in their colleges being Lutheran or Catholic or Congregational."<sup>130</sup> The faculty members became dissociated from responsibility to oversee the moral discipline of the students and became more interested in their own academic disciplines. Burtchaell views this disengagement with melancholy because he feels that the schools should have "cultivated their denominational affiliations, and that they could have helped their churches intellectually in the process."<sup>131</sup> One specific example of disengagement will illustrate the nature of his evidence. He documents that at one time the Methodists had established more than 1,200 schools (colleges and universities). As of 1998, nearly 90 percent have closed, merged, or disaffiliated. The list of Methodist related institutions is 87 universities and four-year colleges.<sup>132</sup> Many social and economic factors have been part of this disengagement process, but Burtchaell would argue that secularization was the dominant force.

In a related article, Burtchaell frames the secularization process as four "waves" of secularization. He argues that it was during the "third wave of secularization" that

---

<sup>129</sup> James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998).

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 828-29.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, xi.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

occurred between 1920 and 1945 that “discredited religious belief and practice as alien to valid scholarship, and insisted that religious belief be allowed no status in higher education except as private and extracurricular.”<sup>133</sup> In this article Burtchaell uses Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, as a case study of a Southern Methodist university that experienced this disengagement. In explaining Vanderbilt University’s estrangement from the church, he asserts that one of the chief factors is the role of the president of the institution; the usual pattern followed is that when the president was a bishop in the church the relationship usually remained strong. When the leadership of the university shifted to a lay president, this was usually the turning point of when the institution began to turn away from the church’s influence. Burtchaell summarizes this shift: “there was a president determined to raise the institution to a higher cubit of excellence who saw the ecclesiastical establishment as a real or potential adversary to his project and rival to his power.”<sup>134</sup> He concludes that what happened to Vanderbilt University could also happen to the Catholic universities in the United States because of the powerful force of secularization.

Taking all four historians of education, and considering their body of work as a whole, they provide compelling evidence that some type of secularization occurred in American higher education at the beginning of the twentieth century. While each historian may have a somewhat different interpretation of how secularization was manifested or how it proceeded, there are these commonalities: first, all four agree that it

---

<sup>133</sup> ———, “The Decline and Fall of the Christian College,” *First Things: The Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life* (1991): 9.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

was some type of secularization that brought changes to and within the American university; second, the majority of the researchers view some type of connection between science (especially the natural and physical sciences) and secularization;<sup>135</sup> third, the majority provided some evidence that religion's influence or role was diminished in the modern university. .

In contrast to the interpretations offered by Veysey and the three revisionist historians, sociologists Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge offer an alternative interpretation of how secularization worked during the 1920s. They agree that secularization has affected a decline in the "impact and centrality of traditional religious societies" and a "retreat from supernaturalism by the major religious bodies," but they disagree on the "scope and the eventual consequences of these changes."<sup>136</sup> They do not accept the standard interpretation of secularization that it is an "irreversible trend that will, sooner or later spell the end of religion and of religious organizations as significant factors in advanced societies."<sup>137</sup> Instead, they hypothesize that secularization is a "self-limiting process prompting religious revival and innovation." They reason that as secularization works in the decline of mainstream denominations, it creates opportunity for religious innovation. "Particular religious bodies are withering away, and in

---

<sup>135</sup> In 1963 sociologist of religion Rodney Stark (then at the University of California, Berkeley) conducted a survey of American graduate students to determine the "incompatibility of religion and science." Out of the study, Stark arrived at these two conclusions: first, "that a major religious phenomenon associated with being a graduate student is a loss of faith;" second, "these findings give convincing confirmation to the original hypothesis of this paper--religion and scientific scholarship seem to be mutually exclusive perspectives." See Rodney Stark, "On the Incompatibility of Religion and Science: A Survey of American Graduate Students," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 3, no. 1 (1963): 3-20.

<sup>136</sup> Rodney Stark, and William Sims Bainbridge, "Secularization and Cult Formation in the Jazz Age," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20, no. 4 (1981): 361.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

consequence human religious energy is pouring into new channels.” They put forth the hypothesis that “cults will flourish where the conventional churches are weakest.” To test their hypothesis, they analyzed data for the year 1926 (during the Jazz Age), studying the connections between church activity and cult formation in 70 cities with populations of more than 100,000. What they found was “cults flourished where the churches were weak—that the crumbling of familiar religious institutions prompts the rise of novel religions, not the dawn of secular society.”<sup>138</sup> One of the implications of this research by Stark and Bainbridge upon my study is that while mainstream denominations were losing members and influence at the university, emerging religious groups (to use Stark and Bainbridge’s term, “cults”) like the Latter-day Saints were taking this opportunity to flourish.

I claim that the IRM is an excellent case study of how a church creates a postsecondary religious educational program. I feel justified in using the term “case study” in the context of Robert K. Yin’s definition: “In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.”<sup>139</sup> Sharan Merriam clarifies the nature of the case study that I have completed; she refers to the “historical case study” in the field of education. She writes, “Historical case studies have tended to be descriptions of institutions,

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 363.

<sup>139</sup> Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra Rog, Revised ed., vol. 5, Applied Social Research Methods Series (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1989), 13.

programs, and practices as they have evolved over time.”<sup>140</sup> Merriam explains the challenge of the historical case study: “To understand an event and apply one’s knowledge to present practice means knowing the context of the event, the assumptions behind it, and perhaps the event’s impact on the institution or participants.”<sup>141</sup>

### **Statement about Primary and Secondary Sources**

In order to answer my first historical question, how did the IRM get started?—I used the primary sources generated by the original “players” in the IRM creation. First are the writings and documents from the primary institutional player, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its Department of Education. In 1926 the President of the Church was Heber J. Grant with Charles W. Nibley as his first counselor in the First Presidency, the highest ranking executive body of the Church. The Commissioner of Education was Dr. John A. Widtsoe who was later replaced by Dr. Joseph F. Merrill. The papers of all four of these leaders are located in the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In attempting to access the personal or institutional papers of Heber J. Grant and his counselor, Charles W. Nibley at the Church History Library, I was informed that the Library’s policy is that their papers were “restricted.” The official written policy is: “The Church History Department is committed to making its records available to the public to the extent it can reasonably do so without compromising those that are sacred,

---

<sup>140</sup> Sharan B Merriam, *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988), 25.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

confidential, private, or otherwise restricted for legal or ethical reasons.”<sup>142</sup> Because their papers were “produced in the conduct of Church business that takes place in non-public settings” they are considered to be “confidential” and therefore restricted. Because of this policy, I was never able to access President Grant’s papers or those of Charles W. Nibley. In drawing conclusions about what these men were thinking or how they arrived at decisions, I had to piece together evidence from other sources I was able to access and then make the most reasoned conclusions, a practice that all historians must employ at some time or another.

The restriction of access to Church leaders’ papers is not a new policy; doctoral student Leon Hartshorn encountered the same phenomenon in researching his dissertation while at Stanford University in 1965. He was researching the LDS Church educational program from 1951-1964 and he made this observation about access and availability to sources:

The Mormon Church is a theocracy, not a Democracy. The President of the Church is accepted as a prophet of God. The decisions of President David O. McKay [president from 1951-1970] and other General Authorities are made in private meetings, and those decisions are then given to the membership of the Church, often with little or no explanation. The decisions are accepted by the faithful with little or no questioning. Education decisions are made the same way in the Mormon Church. This is true of Church income and expenditures. The minutes of meetings held are not available.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Jennifer St. Clair, Email, August 4, 2011.

<sup>143</sup> Leon Roundy Hartshorn, "Mormon Education in the Bold Years" (Dissertation, Stanford University, 1965), 9.



The Church History Library's policies of 1965 continue today. Although I did not have direct access to Grant's and Nibley's papers, some of the Church Board of Education minutes had been referred to by William E. Berrett in published sources, so I was able to access his research notes. Using this indirect method, I was able to access some of the ideas President Grant expressed in Church Board of Education meetings.

While I was not able to access the papers of John A. Widtsoe and Joseph F. Merrill at the Church History Library, I was able to access Joseph F. Merrill's papers housed in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University. For John A. Widtsoe, I was able to use *In a Sunlit Land: The Autobiography of John A. Widtsoe* published in 1952 and Alan K Parrish's 2003 work *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography*.<sup>144</sup> References to John A. Widtsoe sometimes appear in the papers of Joseph F. Merrill and J. Wyley Sessions.

The next important individual is J. Wyley Sessions, appointed by the Church as the director of the first Institute of Religion. His writings and correspondence are extremely valuable because he was the primary figure at the local level in establishing the original Institute as well as establishing the third Institute in Pocatello, Idaho, and the sixth Institute in Laramie, Wyoming. His correspondence with Church headquarters is located at the same library in Salt Lake City. I was given permission to look at his correspondence. He eventually ended up teaching at Brigham Young University (BYU), where his oral history interview and other important papers are now housed in the L. Tom

---

<sup>144</sup> John A. Widtsoe, *In a Sunlit Land: The Autobiography of John A. Widtsoe* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1952). Alan K. Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003).

Perry Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library on the BYU campus at Provo, Utah. The Sessions family donated his papers and correspondence to BYU. Sessions' personal recollections provide the details about how the first Institute was created. I have also established a direct contact with the Sessions family through the grandchildren of J. Wyley Sessions. They have shared information and documents with me as well.

The last key player in this history is the institutional player, the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho. Their Special Collections housed in the main library has the papers of Frederick J. Kelly, the man who was president from 1927-1930, the corresponding years when the IRM was getting started. Another important primary source for this study is the University of Idaho student newspaper, the *Idaho Argonaut*, as well as local newspapers from the surrounding community of Moscow. These newspapers are housed in the main library on the University of Idaho campus.

Adjacent to the University of Idaho is the Institute building; the original building constructed in 1928 was razed and replaced with an updated structure, and it has subsequently been remodeled. The current Institute has a library that contains in its collections some documents concerning the history of the program. The local congregation compiled some of the recollections of the students who were involved with the IRM when it was first organized. The collection is called *The Mormons on the Palouse: History and Recollections* and was compiled in 1987.<sup>145</sup> The personal stories of five students who were involved with the first years of the Institute are a valuable

---

<sup>145</sup> W. Homer Peterson, ed. *The Mormons on the Palouse: History and Recollections* (Pullman, Washington: Pullman Washington Stake, 1987); *ibid.*

primary source. Utilizing the primary sources found at the LDS Church Library, the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, the Special Collections at the University of Idaho, and the documents and sources at the Moscow Institute library have provided me with sufficient historical information to answer my first historical question.

Concerning the secondary part of the first question—the milieu of American society in the 1920s, I have found primary sources that are cultural markers of the 1920s: popular magazines of the era like *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, and *Ladies' Home Journal*. The majority of these are available either at the Rivera Library at the University of California, Riverside, or through its Interlibrary Loan Services.

Since the main thrust of my study is focused on the IRM, I have concentrated my efforts on finding primary sources related to it. After the creation of the first Institute at the University of Idaho, the next four were established at other universities in the West. The primary sources concerning the establishment of these subsequent Institutes have been collected in the Church History Library in Salt Lake City. I have contacted each Institute individually and they have shared some important documents for my research.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Because I am a practicing, or “active,” member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the desire to be objective is strong, but the ability to view the data may be influenced by my religious experiences and by my religious beliefs. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., the prolific Harvard historian once wrote: “The historian’s goals are

accuracy, analysis, and objectivity in the reconstruction of the past.”<sup>146</sup> About achieving objectivity, Schlesinger added, “Historians must always strive toward the unattainable ideal of objectivity.”<sup>147</sup> In conducting a research study on a religious educational program, I am attempting to achieve accuracy and objectivity. George Marsden, an American historian whose primary academic interest has been the history of the interaction of Christianity and American culture, made this observation about objectivity: “Inevitably one’s point of view will shape one’s work. Since it is impossible to be objective, it is imperative to be fair.”<sup>148</sup> He further suggested that one way to be fair is to “say something about one’s point of view so that others can take it into account and discount it if they wish.”<sup>149</sup> I am sharing my point of view so that readers will have the opportunity to understand my perspective. In the final analysis, I aspire to the lofty goals expressed by the Mormon historian, Leonard J. Arrington—considered by his peers to be the “single most important Mormon historian of his generation”<sup>150</sup>—in his remarks to the Mormon History Association:

We historians [in “the fraternity of Mormon scholars”] were resolved that our histories would be marked by thorough research, superior writing, and the display of the true spirit of Latter-day Saintism

---

<sup>146</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*, Revised and enlarged edition ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 51.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>148</sup> George M Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), xi.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Davis Bitton, "Introduction," in *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, ed. Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1987), vii.

so that our history would give us and our readers new understandings of Mormon experiences in the past and present.<sup>151</sup>

## Chapter Overviews

In Chapter 2, I summarize the theological and philosophical foundations of Latter-day Saint education; my premise is that without knowing the foundational doctrines of Mormonism regarding education the explanation of their education system would be incomprehensible. Additionally, I present an overview of the milestones of Latter-day Saint educational programs that were precursors to the IRM. These educational precursors will give the reader a context for understanding the founding and establishment of the IRM. I present a summary of the socio-cultural milieu of American society from 1910-1920, with emphasis on the effects of the World War. I argue that American society was turning from its Christian moral values and was moving to more worldly trends and losing its faith in religion.

I present in Chapter 3 the socio-cultural milieu in American society in the 1920s that forms the backdrop of the founding of the IRM. My thesis in this chapter is that the Revolution in morals and manners was of grave concern to the LDS leaders who decided to create the IRM. In this chapter I narrate the actions taken in the founding of the first Latter-day Saint Institute at the University of Idaho, in Moscow, Idaho. I discuss the community feeling in Moscow, Idaho, in 1926 when J. Wyley Sessions, the first appointed Institute director, arrived in that northern Idaho town. I analyze the various

---

<sup>151</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 72.

factors that influenced the creation of the first Institute and the challenges that Sessions faced in its creation.

Chapter 4 expands the growth of the IRM as I narrate the establishment of the next four institutes from 1928 to 1935. My argument is that the Institutes reacted to the socio-cultural milieu of each town or city and each university in trying to expand this fledgling religious educational program. Each Institute director had to be flexible in order to adapt the program to the needs of the LDS students.

My concluding chapter, Chapter 5, discusses the major conclusions of my research and summarizes the answers to the historical questions that I have proposed to answer. I summarize the significance of my study and how it contributes to the literature on the history of American higher education. As a historical case study of a religious educational movement I explain how my study has filled in some important gaps in the literature.

## Chapter 2: An Overview of Latter-day Saint Education, 1830-1920

“. . . Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.”

--Joseph Smith, Jr., Kirtland, Ohio, 1832.

### Theological Foundations of Latter-day Saint Education

In order to understand the origin of the IRM, first it is necessary to have some knowledge about the religious organization that sponsored the movement, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Church traces its beginning to the religious activities of Joseph Smith, Jr.<sup>1</sup> His impact on the LDS Church is comparable to that of Martin Luther upon the Lutheran Church. In theology, in doctrine, in ecclesiastical organization, in religious rituals, Joseph Smith, Jr., influenced the LDS Church. From the founding of the Church on April 6, 1830, the doctrine of the importance of learning and education has been emphasized.

That education was important was implied when in 1833 Joseph Smith claimed to receive this axiom: “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.”<sup>2</sup> In order to obtain this light and truth, members of the Church were instructed to “seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and by faith.”<sup>3</sup> In that same revelation Joseph Smith claimed to have been instructed along with other members of the Church in Kirtland, Ohio, to “Organize yourselves; prepare every needful

---

<sup>1</sup> The biographies on the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Jr., abound. Historian Richard L. Bushman points out that there have been at least twenty book-length biographies written about the Mormon founder. See Richard Lyman Bushman, "A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-first Century," in *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 262.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet with Some Additions by His Successors in the Presidency of the Church* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), 182.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.”<sup>4</sup> Eventually this house of learning was realized when the Latter-day Saints constructed the Kirtland Temple which was completed in 1836. Prior to its completion, the “School of the Prophets” was held during the winter of 1832-1833. It was an adult education institution for the male leaders of the Church. Through claimed revelation, the curriculum was to include “. . . things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land, and knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms . . .”<sup>5</sup> All of these subjects were to be studied so that the Church leaders as missionaries would be prepared as they went to the various nations to preach the gospel. According to Robert L. Millet, professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, “education assumed a prominent position among Mormon priorities from the very beginning.”<sup>6</sup> In 1937 a sociologist working for the Works Progress Administration made this observation about Mormons and education: “Next to missionary service to bring the chosen to Zion, education has always been the most profound interest of the Mormon family.”<sup>7</sup>

The emphasis on education continues in the Church today. Recently, the Second Counselor in the First Presidency (the presiding three men who direct the Church), Dieter

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Millet, "The Educational System of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," in *Religious Higher Education in the United States: A Source Book*, ed. Thomas C. Hunt and James C. Carper, *Source Books on Education* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1996), 49.

<sup>7</sup> Nels Anderson, "The Mormon Family," *American Sociological Review* 2, no. 5 (1937): 605.



F. Uchtdorf, addressed a group of members gathered in a general conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, and told them, “For members of the Church, education is not merely a good idea—it’s a commandment.” He went on to tell them, “. . . you have a duty to learn as much as you can. Please encourage your families, your quorum members [male members who hold the priesthood], everyone to learn and become better educated.”<sup>8</sup>

To the youth of the Church, adolescents from ages twelve to eighteen, the leaders have instructed them that “The Lord wants you to educate your mind and improve your skills and abilities. Education will help you to be an influence for good in the world. It will help you better provide for yourself, your love ones, and those in need.”<sup>9</sup> The Church leaders have advised the youth that getting a good education will require work and sacrifice, but it will be worth it because it will give them an advantage in a competitive world. Furthermore, they are instructed to develop “an enthusiasm for learning throughout your life” and to find “joy in continuing to learn about yourself, other people, and the world around you.”<sup>10</sup> This emphasis on education and learning was practiced from the very beginning of the founding of the LDS Church and eventually it was translated into several education programs by the Church.

### **The Influence of Joseph Smith upon the Church’s Development of an Educational Program**

Joseph Smith was born December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont. During his childhood, his family moved from Vermont to the Palmyra, New York, area. He received

---

<sup>8</sup> Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Two Principles for Any Economy," *Ensign*, November 2009, 58.

<sup>9</sup> "For the Strength of Youth: Fulfilling Our Duty to God," ed. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 9.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

minimal schooling, probably less than two years of formal instruction, but sufficient “to learn his letters.”<sup>11</sup> Three of his older siblings received more schooling than Joseph, but his father, Joseph Smith, Sr., taught school in the winter and farmed in the summer while they lived in Vermont, so he probably received some instruction at home. Despite his lack of formal schooling, Smith showed interest in studying and learning his entire life.

The original interest in education that Joseph Smith as well as other early members of the LDS Church exhibited can be traced to three influences. First, many of the close associates of Joseph Smith, men who were attracted to the Church and its prophet, were educators. These teachers included Oliver Cowdery, Orson Hyde, Sidney Rigdon, and William E. McLellin; according to Orson Hyde, all of these men had taught school prior to 1830.<sup>12</sup> All of these men were important leaders in the beginning decades of the Church. A second strong influence towards an interest in education was that many of the first converts to the LDS faith came from New England states where some of the first American educational programs were started. Many of these New England converts felt a great pride in their educational foundations and this carried over into their thoughts and actions in Kirtland, Ohio. Finally, and most importantly, education was important because Joseph Smith claimed to receive revelations from God wherein he was taught the importance of learning.

As Joseph Smith claimed to receive the revelations enlightening him about the importance of learning, he shared his enlightenment with his followers and applied his

---

<sup>11</sup> Richard Lyman Bushman, with the assistance of Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Orlen Curtis Peterson, "A History of the Schools and Educational Programs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ohio and Missouri, 1831-1839" (Master of Arts, Brigham Young University, 1972), 3.

insights to real school situations. Joseph Smith contributed some unique and innovative ideas to educational theory. First of all, he taught the idea of deification, or *apotheosis*, was the “pinnacle of human advancement.”<sup>13</sup> In order to become like God, humans must learn how God communicates with other intelligent beings through divine assemblies that Smith called “the Councils of the Gods.” These divine Councils provide models of how human associations should operate with open dialogue among participants in a type of deliberative council. Smith taught since “humans are to become like God, then learning to engage in deliberative council becomes a pathway [to] the divine life.”<sup>14</sup> From this perspective, Smith would argue that school is a “preparation for, and participation in, this light-giving life. It is a place where one learns to participate in the Councils of the Gods.”<sup>15</sup> Smith’s concept of creating an educational assembly that would emulate the divine council model found its fulfillment in the creation of the School of the Prophets whose purpose was to “initiate students into the divine life of cooperative creation.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Three Milestones of Latter-day Saint Education: The School of the Prophets, the University of the City of Nauvoo, and the University of Deseret**

Given the claim that education and learning are important to the members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, how was this translated into actual practice? How did Latter-day Saints apply the principles that Joseph Smith taught about intelligence, learning, and seeking knowledge? One of the ways to answer these questions is to analyze what kinds of schools that the Latter-day Saints established. I have chosen

---

<sup>13</sup> Bryan A. Warnick, "Bringing Religious Traditions into Educational Theory: Making an Example of Joseph Smith, Jr.," *Educational Theory* 54, no. 4 (2004): 353.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

three schools as milestones and models of Latter-day Saint education. The first of these is the School of the Prophets.

The origins of the School of the Prophets can be traced to a revelation claimed to have been received by Joseph Smith on December 27, 1832, in Kirtland, Ohio. Jesus Christ instructed Smith “to teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.” The revelation was addressed to Smith to instruct the other leaders of the Church. He was told to “teach ye diligently . . . that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand.”<sup>17</sup> As for texts, the Lord instructed Smith, “seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” As for instructional methodology, Smith was instructed to “Appoint among yourselves a teacher, and let not all be spokesmen at once; but let one speak at a time and let all listen unto his sayings, that when all have spoken that all may be edified of all and that every man may have an equal privilege.”<sup>18</sup> Joseph Smith followed the Lord’s instruction on what to teach, “the doctrine of the kingdom,” what texts to use, “the best books” and how to teach, allowing each student to speak and all to listen so that all could be edified.

The School of the Prophets was organized on January 23, 1833, with approximately fourteen men. The eventual number of participants varies from seventeen to twenty-one, depending on the recollection of the participants.<sup>19</sup> The school was held in

---

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants*: 170.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-74.

<sup>19</sup> Peterson, "History of the Schools and Educational Programs of the L.D.S. Church in Ohio and Missouri, 1831-1839," 15-17.

a small room situated over Joseph Smith's kitchen in a small house that was connected to Newel K. Whitney's store. From the beginning, Joseph Smith was sustained as the president of the school and Orson Hyde as the teacher. Occasionally, Sidney Rigdon gave lectures on English grammar.<sup>20</sup> According to Joseph Smith's claim, he was informed that the primary purpose of the school was for the benefit of the "first laborers in this last kingdom," the group of men who were called to be the leaders and missionaries in the Church. Because some of these elders of the Church had not received much formal schooling, they were instructed to study a comprehensive curriculum: including, "things both in heaven and in the earth," which could be interpreted as the natural sciences; "the wars and perplexities of the nations, and the judgments on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and kingdoms,"<sup>21</sup> which could be interpreted as the social sciences. The purpose for all this instruction was that they would be prepared as missionaries when sent to the nations of the world to "testify and warn the people."<sup>22</sup>

The exact frequency of the class sessions by the School of the Prophets is not known, but it is speculated that it could have met daily, once or twice a week, or just whenever the school president would call it into session. Sometime between April 13, and April 21, 1833, the school was closed with plans to reopen it the following winter. While it had a very short life, approximately twelve weeks, the School of the Prophets

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants*: 170.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

remains “not only the first official educational institution of the Church but also the most unique.”<sup>23</sup>

The next milestone of Latter-day Saint education occurred in Nauvoo, Illinois. The Church had moved its headquarters several times already and during the winter of 1838-1839 the Latter-day Saints abandoned their homes in Missouri due to the persecution, accusations, and conflicts with some of the people of Missouri.<sup>24</sup> The last straw was the “Order of Extermination” issued on October 27, 1838, by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs: “The Mormons must be treated as enemies and *must be exterminated* [emphasis in the original] or driven from the state, if necessary for the public good.”<sup>25</sup> The Mormons had to flee to a safe haven, so they crossed the border into Illinois where they found temporary quarters in Quincy. They purchased land just north of Quincy in what was called Commerce, Illinois. By summer the name was unofficially changed to Nauvoo, derived from Hebrew and meaning “a beautiful place of rest.”<sup>26</sup> By the spring of 1840 federal officials renamed the Commerce post office Nauvoo; in December of the

---

<sup>23</sup> Peterson, "History of the Schools and Educational Programs of the L.D.S. Church in Ohio and Missouri, 1831-1839," 13.

<sup>24</sup>The issue of the conflict between the Mormons and some of the citizens of Missouri is complex; it was caused by a combination of theological, social, political, cultural, and economic issues. For the Latter-day Saint point of view to explain the theological and religious reasons for the conflict the standard work is B. H. Roberts, *The Missouri Persecutions* (Salt Lake City, UT: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1899; reprint, 1965). To illustrate the basic differences dividing the Mormons from the people of Missouri, these words from a citizen of Clay County, Missouri captures the essence of the conflict: "They [the Mormons] are eastern men, whose manners, habits, customs, and even dialect, are essentially different from our own. They are non-slaveholders, and opposed to slavery, which in this peculiar period, when abolitionism has reared its deformed and haggard visage in our land, is well calculated to excite deep and abiding prejudice in any community where slavery is tolerated and protected." See Leonard J. Arrington, and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. (Urbana and Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 49. Chapter 3 on "Early Persecutions" provides a complete analysis of the causes of the persecutions that the Mormons experienced in New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois.

<sup>25</sup> James B. Allen, and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd, revised and enlarged ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 136.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

same year state legislators granted the city a charter. The Latter-day Saints had a new home in Illinois. One of the noteworthy provisions of the charter, granted on December 16, 1840, to go into effect in February of the following year, was that it allowed establishment of the University of the City of Nauvoo. On February 1, 1841, elections were held and John C. Bennett (the same John C. Bennett who had earned the reputation as a “diploma peddler” by conferring a range of academic degrees for fees which he pocketed and did not share with the institutions that he was officially representing)<sup>27</sup> was not only elected mayor of the city, but he was also elected to be the chancellor of the university. In his first address to the Nauvoo City Council, Bennett shared his philosophy of education in advocating a “utilitarian” university in which “education should always be of a purely *practical* character, for such, and such alone, is calculated to perfect the happiness, and prosperity, of our fellow citizens . . .”<sup>28</sup> Fifteen men were chosen as regents, including Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and two of Joseph’s brothers, Hyrum Smith and Samuel H. Smith. The regents were active in planning the educational program for the University of the City of Nauvoo and all the schools below the university. In May 1842 John C. Bennett requested an official withdrawal from the Latter-day Saint Church, resigning as mayor and chancellor the same day. He was immediately replaced by Joseph Smith as mayor and Orson Spencer as chancellor.

Although the First Presidency of the church had projected that the University of the City of Nauvoo would become “one of the great lights to the world,” the reality was

---

<sup>27</sup> John R Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 57.

<sup>28</sup> John C. Bennett, *The History of the Saints, or, An Expose of Joe Smith and Mormonism*, 3rd ed. (Boston, Massachusetts: Leland & Whiting, 1842; reprint, Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 21-22.

that it existed only on paper, and the plans for it to occupy a separate campus were never realized.<sup>29</sup> The citizens of Nauvoo had to settle for some classes taught in homes, public church buildings, the Masonic Hall, and eventually in the Nauvoo Temple. Three of the Church leaders who made significant contributions to the secondary schools were Orson Pratt who taught mathematics and related science subjects, Orson Spencer who specialized in foreign languages, and Sidney Rigdon who taught theology.<sup>30</sup> Although the school system established by the Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo lasted only four years, nevertheless, according to one educational historian, “it can still be said that the idea of free schooling from common school through the University was a highly progressive adventure for pioneers in an educational wilderness.”<sup>31</sup>

The third milestone of Latter-day Saint education was the establishment of the University of Deseret in Salt Lake City in 1850. After the Mormons abandoned Nauvoo, Illinois, they headed west and settled in the Great Basin near the Great Salt Lake. The first group arrived on July 24, 1847, and within the next ten years a total of forty thousand Latter-day Saints had settled in more than ninety sites in the intermountain west.<sup>32</sup> The area settled by the pioneers was formed into a provisional state government in March 1849 and was called the State of Deseret.<sup>33</sup> The word “deseret” comes from the

---

<sup>29</sup> Allen, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*: 173.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Calvin V. French, "Organization and Administration of the Latter-day Saint School System of Free Education, Common School through University of Nauvoo, Illinois, 1840-1845" (Thesis, Temple University, 1965), 70.

<sup>32</sup> Allen, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*: 277.

<sup>33</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, Studies in Economic History (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 50.



Book of Mormon and means “honeybee” and is symbolic of hard work and industry.<sup>34</sup>

The State of Deseret served as the state government until the spring of 1851 when President Millard Fillmore signed an act to create Utah Territory and appointed Brigham Young as the first territorial governor.

The educational system that developed in Utah Territory was generally under the guidance and supervision of the Latter-day Saint Church and most often reflected the world view of the Church and its president, Brigham Young. His own education consisted of “eleven days” in a Common School,<sup>35</sup> but he felt that education was important, especially vocational training. In an address to the Regents of the newly created University of Deseret in 1850, Brigham Young shared his definition of education: “the power to think clearly, the power to act well in the world’s work, and the power to appreciate life.”<sup>36</sup> This three-part view of education, using the mind, the hands, and the heart would influence what the Latter-day Saints created in their schools.

The idea of the University of Deseret was first discussed in 1850. The Saints had been in the valley just over two years when in the “General Assembly of the State of Deseret” held on February 28, 1850, the legislators “ordained . . . that a University is hereby instituted and incorporated . . . by the name of the University of the State of Deseret . . .”<sup>37</sup> The organization of the university called for a chancellor and twelve regents who were to act as the university’s trustees. The expressed purpose of the

---

<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey Ogden Johnson, “Deseret, State of,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 371.

<sup>35</sup> Federick S. Buchanan, “Education among the Mormons: Brigham Young and the Schools of Utah,” *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1982): 443.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 456.

<sup>37</sup> Ralph V. Chamberlin, *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850 to 1950*, ed. Harold W. Bentley (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1960), 1.

university was to advance “all useful and fine art and sciences.”<sup>38</sup> The creation of the University of Deseret was essentially a recreation of the University of the City of Nauvoo that had been formed in Illinois in 1841 with the same functions and organization plan. In fact, Orson Spencer, who had replaced John C. Bennett as the chancellor in Nauvoo, was selected as first Chancellor of the new university. Spencer and the twelve regents met for the first time as the Board of Regents on March 13, 1850. One of the first orders of business was to find a site appropriate for the newly formed university as well as sites for the primary schools. A committee on sites for schools reported back that they had selected a site for the university on the “bench east of the city.”<sup>39</sup> The Regents approved the site and a grant secured for the parcel of land which came to be known as the “University Square” and the Legislature of the Territory of Utah confirmed the tract of land for the university on December 28, 1855.

The University of Deseret was built on the “Nauvoo Plan,” that is, it was to act as a type of “parent school” for the entire territorial school system. It was responsible for teaching the higher levels of education and preparing and instructing teachers for the primary and secondary schools of the territory. It would act also as a supervisor over the lower levels of schools, ensuring that their curriculum and instruction were adequate. While in theory the University of Deseret was a great success, the reality was that it suspended operation from 1851 until 1867 because of insufficient funding.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>40</sup> Buchanan, "Education among the Mormons: Brigham Young and the Schools of Utah," 448.

After its dormant period, the University of Deseret was resuscitated when on December 2, 1867, Brigham Young, Chancellor Albert Carrington, Regents of the university, and many of the community leaders met to effect its reorganization. Brigham Young chose to call this new version of the university the “School of the Prophets” because it was “. . . under the guidance of the Holy Priesthood; and hence, it may properly be called the ‘School of the Prophets.’”<sup>41</sup> Many adult male students participated in a theological class of the University of Deseret and as the class evolved it became known as the School of the Prophets. This class with the name of the School of the Prophets separated from the University of Deseret which continued to operate as a secular school. It eventually evolved into a state university and took the name of the University of Utah with its new charter adopted on February 17, 1892.<sup>42</sup>

### **Important Themes of Latter-day Saint Education in the Nineteenth Century**

From these three milestones or models of Latter-day Saint education, all of which occurred in the nineteenth century, some significant themes emerge that characterize Latter-day Saint education. First of all, learning through education and study is a high priority for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The main reason for this emphasis on learning stems from the theological axioms that Joseph Smith claimed to have received in revelation: (1.) “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.”<sup>43</sup> (2.) “. . . seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek

---

<sup>41</sup> John R. Patrick, "The School of the Prophets: Its Development and Influence in Utah Territory" (Master of Arts, Brigham Young University, 1970), 20.

<sup>42</sup> Chamberlin, *University of Utah*: 173.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants*: 182.

learning, even by study and also by faith.”<sup>44</sup> (3.) “And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.”<sup>45</sup> On one occasion Joseph Smith summarized the theological foundation for Latter-day Saints’ emphasis on learning: “In knowledge there is power. God has more power than all other beings, because he has greater knowledge.”<sup>46</sup>

A second theme is that learning and knowledge are important, but the knowledge that has the most value to Latter-day Saints is the true knowledge of God, in other words, theology. Professor Robert L. Millet’s explanation about the emphasis on theology provides a perspective on how to understand the importance of theology for Latter-day Saints: “The philosophy of education in early Mormon society placed theology at the hub of the wheel, with the secular disciplines serving as spokes.”<sup>47</sup> Parley P. Pratt, an early Church leader and associate of Joseph Smith, gave this explanation of the importance of theology:

“It is the science of all other sciences and useful arts, being in fact the very fountain from which they emanate. It includes philosophy, astronomy, history, mathematics, geography, language, the science of letters; and blends the knowledge of all matters of fact, in every branch of art, or of research . . . all that is useful, great, and good; . . . originated by this science, and this science alone, all other sciences being but branches growing out of this—the root.”<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>46</sup> Millet, "Religious Higher Education in the United States," 49.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 51.

Brigham Young, the second president of the LDS Church, although limited in his formal education, “I never went to school but eleven days in my life,”<sup>49</sup> encouraged the Latter-day Saints to “learn everything that the children of men know.”<sup>50</sup> But in learning “everything” the most important learning for Young was “the things of God;” he wanted the Saints to “elevate their minds” to not only understand the “earth we walk upon” but also to “become acquainted with the planetary system, the dwellings of the angels and the heavenly beings, that they may ultimately be prepared for a higher state of being, and finally be associated with them.”<sup>51</sup> He believed strongly in learning about all subjects and excelling in that learning, but he would always emphasize the spiritual learning over the secular; for Brigham Young, “There is only one source from whence men obtain wisdom, and that is God, the fountain of all wisdom; and though men may claim to make their discoveries by their own wisdom, by meditation and reflection, they are indebted to our Father in heaven for all.”<sup>52</sup> This principle that spiritual knowledge is more valuable was reinforced by the First Presidency in a letter to the Church Board of Education: “The Church schools must, it is true, give instruction in secular fields of learning, but this instruction should be given in such terms as will strengthen and build up the spiritual knowledge and experience of the students.”<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Hugh W. Nibley, "Chapter 11: Educating the Saints," in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless: Classic Essays of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. Hugh W. Nibley, *Volume One in the Religious Studies Monograph Series* (Salt Lake City, UT: Publishers Press, 1978), 235.

<sup>50</sup> Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, England: F. D. and S. W. Richards, 1854-1866), v. 16, p. 77.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 14, p. 210.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, v. 13, p. 149.

<sup>53</sup> Gary James Bergera, *Statements of the L.D.S. First Presidency: A Topical Compendium* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2007), 128.

A final theme that emerges from an analysis of Latter-day Saint education in the nineteenth century is the financial commitment that the Church was willing to make to support education. That support usually took the form of funding schools at all levels. The positive aspect of the financial commitment was that Latter-day Saints established schools wherever they settled. The possible downside was that the Church had, like any institution with limited resources, to prioritize how to best utilize their finances and still support three major expenditures: missionary work—the claim of Joseph Smith that once the true church had been restored to the earth again, that truth needed to be shared to all the world by sending missionaries to all nations, the building of temples and other houses of worship, and supporting an educational system. Another issue was the fluctuations of the American economy. The LDS Church was not immune to the financial peaks and valleys of the national or regional economy. The Church depended mainly on the voluntary tithes of its members to fund its activities. As the economy would decline, the voluntary contributions would likewise decrease and the results would affect what programs and activities it could fund.

### **Examples of the LDS Church’s Financial Support of Education**

To exemplify the Church’s commitment to financially support education during the nineteenth century, besides the three universities described above, in the 1850s in Salt Lake City and the larger towns in the territory the Church began a system of “ward” schools which were semi-public; the local “bishop” was legally responsible for organizing the schools and the school trustees. The Church supported these “ward”

schools through the next decades. In 1890 the territorial legislature passed the School Law of 1890 which provided funding for “free” schools for all children. Because of the lack of secondary schools, the president of the Church, Wilford Woodruff, with the support of the General Board of Education, wrote to the Presidency of the St. George Stake: “We feel that the time has arrived when the proper education of our children should be taken by us as a people.”<sup>54</sup> President Woodruff asked that each stake in the Church establish an academy, a private school sponsored by the Church to teach the secular subjects as well as providing Latter-day Saint religious training. Between 1888 and 1909 some thirty-five academies were established by the Church. The Church made a strong financial commitment to support these academies. The church financially supported the academies as long as they could until the financial burden became too great. In the next chapter we will discuss what happens to the academy program.

Simultaneously with the academy program, the Latter-day Saint Church organized the Religion Class program for the elementary school children who were attending public-supported schools. The program was held after school and was used to teach children Latter-day Saint doctrines and scriptures. It was to be organized by every ward in the Church. The First Presidency wrote to the stake presidents that the program was designed “to lessen this great evil,” the great evil that teachings of a religious character were excluded from the public schools and to “counteract the tendencies that grow out of

---

<sup>54</sup> James R. Clark, ed. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, 6 vols., vol. 3 (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1966), 168.

a Godless education, . . .”<sup>55</sup> The Religion Class movement lasted from 1890 to 1927. In the next chapter, we will discuss how the program was phased out.

### **LDS Church’s Financial Support of Post-Secondary Education**

A third financial commitment to education needs to be addressed and that is the Church schools of post-secondary nature. There are four institutions that evolved from academies into colleges or junior colleges and in one case a university. I will briefly outline what they were and how they evolved. On October 16, 1875, Brigham Young deeded some land in Provo to become the Brigham Young Academy (BYA).<sup>56</sup> The BYA was officially opened on January 3, 1876, with Warren N. Dusenberry as principal. He was replaced in April 1876 by Karl G. Maeser who served as principal until 1892. The third principal (later his title was changed to president), Benjamin Cluff, Jr., guided the academy through its growth years and on October 15, 1903, it officially became Brigham Young University (BYU). BYU was to become the Latter-day Saint Church’s only university for a period of decades.

A similar process occurred to the north of Provo in Logan, Utah, in 1877. On July 24, 1877, Brigham Young deeded nearly 10,000 acres of his personal property to establish a school to be called Brigham Young College. From 1877 to 1894 it functioned mainly as a normal school, training students to become elementary school teachers. From 1894 until 1904 it shifted its emphasis to offer college courses and granted bachelor

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>56</sup> Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed. *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 65.



degrees. In its third period, from 1909 to 1926, it functioned as both a high school as well as a junior college. In 1926 it was discontinued by the Church.<sup>57</sup>

The third institution also originated from land deeded by Brigham Young. On September 28, 1876, he deeded land in Salt Lake City for an academy that was originally called the Brigham Young Academy of Salt Lake City.<sup>58</sup> Because of disputes over the deed after Young's death, the school was not immediately established. Finally, in 1889 the name of the academy was changed to LDS College, and Superintendent of church schools, Karl G. Maeser indicated the intentions of the Church to make it the "leading School in the Territory."<sup>59</sup> Willard Young, one of Brigham's sons, was asked to resign his commission in the army to become the president of the new university. In 1892 the Church changed the name of the college to the "University of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," but it was commonly referred to as "The Church University."<sup>60</sup> The unsettled economic conditions of the 1890s did not help The Church University's future. Economic historian Robert Puth writes, "The 1890s in particular were an era of great distress and substantial labor unrest."<sup>61</sup> In 1893 the United States economy suffered what is known as the Panic of 1893. According to historian Ronald Walker, most Western historians either ignore the Panic of 1893 or they treat it as just a prelude to the Silver and Populist agitations. Walker takes exception to that interpretation; he argues, "A close examination of the impact of the financial upheaval upon the specific community of Salt

---

<sup>57</sup> Arnold K. Garr, "Brigham Young College," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 133.

<sup>58</sup> D. Michael Quinn, "The Brief Career of Young University at Salt Lake City," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1973): 70.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>61</sup> Robert C. Puth, *American Economic History*, 3rd ed. (Fort Worth, TX: The Dryden Press, 1993), 404.

Lake City suggests that the panic was indeed a major turning point in the history of the nineteenth-century West.”<sup>62</sup> During the Panic of 1893 stocks dropped in the summer and a record “15,252 businesses went into receivership.”<sup>63</sup> Nationwide, unemployment rose to 18 percent by the winter, and those with jobs found their wages cut by almost 10 percent. This economic panic overtook the Utah economy, causing the General Church Board of Education to “close twenty of the church schools and to postpone the first session of the Church University.”<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, with special arrangements the university opened its doors in September 1893. Unfortunately, it did not survive beyond its first year. The main reason for its demise was the demand of the University of Utah to the president of the Church to close the Church University to save the U of U. With its dissolution, one of the effects was to transform the BYA in Provo from “a neglected institution into the church’s only university.”<sup>65</sup>

The fourth institution was established in the upper Snake River Valley in the town of Rexburg, Idaho. When Thomas E. Ricks was called by the First Presidency to colonize that area, there were strong anti-Mormon feelings by many of the inhabitants in the area, so the Mormons decided to organize their own school in 1888, calling it the Bannock Stake Academy. Between the founding of the academy and 1903, the school changed names three times and eventually was called Ricks Academy to honor Thomas E. Ricks.<sup>66</sup> In 1915 college courses were taught there for the first time, dropping the

---

<sup>62</sup> Ronald W. Walker, "Heber J. Grant and the Panic of 1893," *B.Y.U. Studies* 43, no. 1 (2004): 136.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>64</sup> Quinn, "Brief Career of Young University at Salt Lake City," 81.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>66</sup> Andrew C. Skinner, "Ricks College," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon, Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 1028.

elementary and secondary curriculums. The academy became a normal school and adopted the name Ricks Normal College and in 1923 it became Ricks College. Because of the Great Depression it was feared that the school would be closed. In fact, the Church offered it to the state of Idaho, but it turned down the offer. Ricks College survived and continued to be part of the Church Education System. These post-secondary institutions demonstrate the LDS Church's commitment to support education; they also illustrate the financial fluctuations and crises that the Church has faced in supporting higher education.

### **The Transition of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

When Brigham Young led the Latter-day Saints to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, he set up a type of religious, social, economic, and cultural society based on the concept of the "Mormon village." Economic historian Leonard Arrington describes the "Mormon village concept" as a "network of villages consisting of a cluster of homes on lots laid out 'four square with the world,' and with wide streets intersecting at right angles."<sup>67</sup> The lots would be equal in size and large enough so that families could raise fruits, vegetables, livestock, and poultry. Farmers would live in the village and travel each day outside the village to the agricultural areas for their farming. The village would have agriculture but also manufacturing and mining where possible. Most importantly, the village was to be a self-sufficient unit. For Brigham Young the goal of colonization based on the Mormon village concept was "complete regional economic independence."<sup>68</sup> This economic independence was possible if the Saints would learn "unity and cooperation" and self-sufficiency. Following these goals, the Latter-day Saints could create the "Kingdom of

---

<sup>67</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*: 24.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

God” on earth which they liked to refer to as “Zion”—“a *place*, a *community* of Latter-day Saints, and a *quality* of heart and mind.”<sup>69</sup>

In this Zion society the Saints could practice their economic concept of “cooperatives” wherein they worked together in a spirit of unity and cooperation. Brigham Young taught that economically cooperation “would increase production, cut down costs, and make possible a superior organization of resources.”<sup>70</sup> But for Young the more important consideration was the spiritual benefits of cooperation, developing a spirit of brotherhood which was essential for being a Zion people.

In addition to practicing a style of communal economic system, the isolation from the rest of the United States also allowed the Latter-day Saints to practice a different form of marriage and family life, one in which males could have more than one wife. The Saints preferred to call it the principle of “plural marriage,” but the rest of American society called it polygamy.<sup>71</sup> According to historian Craig L. Foster, “Probably no doctrine of the Mormon Church caused more negative reaction from non-Mormons than that of plural marriage.”<sup>72</sup> Although Joseph Smith and a few of the Church leaders had practiced plural marriage privately in Nauvoo, it was not announced publicly until August 29, 1852, at a special conference held in Salt Lake City. Elder Orson Pratt of the

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>71</sup> Technically, the proper word to describe the manner of plural marriage as practiced by the Latter-day Saints is polygyny, meaning the practice of having more than one wife at the same time; polygamy can be used for either having more than one wife or one husband at the same time; polyandry is the correct word for allowing more than one husband at a time. Plural marriage has a vast bibliography. See Craig L. Foster, “Mormonism of the Frontier: The Saints of the Great Basin,” in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, ed. Newell G. Bringhurst and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2004), 158-60.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 158.

Council of the Twelve was selected to give the first public address on plural marriage.<sup>73</sup> Many Americans in the 1850s and 1860s labeled polygamy as one of the “twin relics of barbarism” (the other being slavery)<sup>74</sup>, and millions of Protestant petitioners flooded Congress with their requests for appropriate legislation to end it. Only a minority of the members of the Church practiced plural marriage, estimated at about 20 percent. The majority of men who practiced the principle, around two-thirds, had only two wives. According to Leonard Arrington, the economic effect of the plural marriage “was to create somewhat larger family units than was typical on the frontier. This permitted a high degree of specialization among family members, and at the same time, a high degree of family self-sufficiency.”<sup>75</sup>

Before the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, and because of their isolation and self-sufficiency the Latter-day Saints remained quite independent, an important goal for their leader, Brigham Young. Economic historian Leonard Arrington claims that “For convenience, one may characterize the Mormon economy before the coming of the railroad as one which was relatively self-sufficient, relatively equalitarian, and relatively homogeneous.”<sup>76</sup> For thirty years while he served as the president of the Church, Brigham Young preached the ideals of cooperation, isolation, independence, and self-sufficiency. Even after his passing in 1877, the Latter-day Saints attempted to live by those ideals. By 1890, external social, political, and religious forces combined to cause,

---

<sup>73</sup> Allen, *Story of the Latter-day Saints*: 286-87.

<sup>74</sup> John C. Breckinridge, *The Substance of a Speech by Hon. John C. Breckinridge: Delivered in the Hall of the House of Representatives, at Frankfurt, Kentucky, December 21, 1859* (n.p.: BiblioLife; reprint, 2009), 4.

<sup>75</sup> Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom*: 238.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

what historian Thomas Alexander calls a major “transition,” or to use the term from Thomas S. Kuhn, a “paradigm shift” for Mormonism.<sup>77</sup>

Using Alexander’s analysis of the paradigm shift, the paradigm held by the Latter-day Saints from 1847 to 1890 was one which “necessitated the integration of religion, politics, society, and the economy into a single non-pluralistic community and adopted polygamy as a means of solving the traditional problem of the marriage relationship.”<sup>78</sup> Historian Kathleen Flake summarizes the same paradigm by describing nineteenth-century Mormonism with these identity markers: “polygamous family structure, utopian communal economy, and rebellious theocratic government, . . .”<sup>79</sup> For Victorian America the practice of polygamy was unacceptable and intolerable: “That feature [polygamy] of Mormonism is so revolting to our natures, so offensive to the moral sense of the age, and so completely at war with all our instincts and with the best interests of society, . . .”<sup>80</sup> For Protestant America the idea of Mormons claiming to have divine revelation to run a theocratic kingdom on earth was unacceptable and intolerable: “. . . the dream of the Mormon leaders is, that under this rule [“the kingdom of God on earth”] the governments of the earth will one by one be brought, until the whole world shall be subjugated.”<sup>81</sup> For many Americans the menace of Mormonism could be reduced

---

<sup>77</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 14-15.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>79</sup> Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>80</sup> C. P. Lyford, *The Mormon Problem, An Appeal to the American People. With an Appendix, Containing Four Original Stories of Mormon Life, Founded on Fact, and a Graphic and Thrilling Account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1886), 7.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

to the label, “the Mormon problem.”<sup>82</sup> According to Reverend Lyford, “The Mormon problem is the most profound and difficult of any with which the American people have ever been called to deal.”<sup>83</sup> In 1890 the Latter-day Saints were facing a changing world and they possessed a paradigm that no longer fit their new world. They needed to find a new paradigm that could make meaning out of their new circumstances. How could they make this transition?

Another way to frame Mormonism’s transition and search for a new paradigm comes from the work of Eric Michael Mazur and his study of how minority religious communities encounter the American constitutional order.<sup>84</sup> Through his studies he concluded that “religious freedom in this country has always been defined against the backdrop of Protestant Christianity, and its expansion has always been determined by the limits to which that dominant culture was willing to go—or in other words, by how much it would tolerate.”<sup>85</sup> What the Mormons were facing in 1890 Mazur would frame in these terms: how can we (a minority religious community) balance the desire to join the dominant culture—monogamous and Protestant America—on the one hand, at the same time maintain our particularistic community identity on the other?

Mazur’s interpretation of how the Latter-day Saints finally resolved the dilemma was through a process that he calls “constitutional conversion.”<sup>86</sup> He uses the term “conversion,” but argues that it would be more accurate to frame the conversion more as

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>84</sup> Eric Michael Mazur, *The Americanization of Religious Minorities: Confronting the Constitutional Order* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

“accepting over time what the dominant culture envisioned (with great vigor) was the community’s proper place in the American constitutional order.”<sup>87</sup> Mazur claims that eventually the LDS Church leadership made significant concessions in its confrontations with federal authority with regards to marriage practices as well as restricting Mormon authority to determine interpretations and practices.

Kathleen Flake frames the transition of Mormonism as a political process, similar to the legal and constitutional process espoused by Mazur. She asks this basic question, “What are the political terms by which diverse religions are brought within America’s constitutional order?”<sup>88</sup> In order to discover the answer to her question, Flake uses the Senate trial of Reed Smoot, an apostle in the LDS Church, for his seat in the United States Senate. Smoot was elected Senator from Utah on January 20, 1903, but because of his membership in the Mormon Church and being a leader in its hierarchy, his seat was contested. The accusation was made that “Smoot was part of an ecclesiastical conspiracy that impermissibly ruled Utah’s citizens and used its power to violate federal antipolygamy law, making Smoot a lawbreaker by association.”<sup>89</sup> For some Americans, contesting the senator-elect’s seat was much more than rejecting a Mormon to federal office; they hoped that “the Smoot case will abolish Mormonism without war. The scandalous blemish will be wiped out by the irresistible abrasion of the public intelligence, judgment, conscience, and indignation.”<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>88</sup> Flake, *Politics of American Religious Identity*: 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>90</sup> These are the words of Murat Halstead who wrote the "Foreward" to a book on polygamy. See *ibid.*, 15.



Smoot's Senate trial did not begin until February 1904 and lasted until 1907 when Smoot was granted his seat in the Senate. During the hearings, polygamy was discussed, but the "real problem, according to the protestants, was the prophetic and priestly character of the L.D.S. Church."<sup>91</sup> Smoot's defense was to call mostly non-Mormon witnesses or "lapsed Mormons" who would testify that a majority of Latter-day Saints were opposed to polygamy and only a small percentage of Mormons ever practiced it. They also testified that the Church did not control their political views. They "painted a picture of a modern church with a new, progressive generation anxious to take it into the twentieth century."<sup>92</sup> In summary, Smoot's trial showed to the Senate and to the rest of the nation that "the Mormons were just like everybody, and if given enough time, their church would be, too." Furthermore, "Since Latter-day Saints were like other Americans, they should have the same privileges and protections as their fellow citizens."<sup>93</sup> Smoot gained his seat in the Senate and there he served for the next thirty years. He served with distinction and brought honor and respect to his church and to his country.

Through the Senate trial of Reed Smoot, Kathleen Flake answers her own question, "What are the political terms by which diverse religions are brought within America's constitutional order?" As Smoot's trial illustrates, the Senate needed to know that the Mormon Church was complying with the federal laws outlawing plural marriage

---

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 89. Flake argues that "The real problem, according to the protestants, was the prophetic and priestly character of the L.D.S. Church." To clarify her argument, I will quote from the "complaint" brought against Senator Smoot. The protestants interpreted the power of the president of the L.D.S. Church--considered by the Mormon people to be the "prophet" and president of the Church--as the power to be "the supreme authority, divinely sanctioned, to shape the belief and control of the conduct of those under them in all matters whatsoever, civil and religious, temporal and spiritual." Their concern was that the president of the Church could dictate to Senator Smoot what to think, and how to vote, and that he would be a mere "puppet" under the priestly powers of the Church's president.

and its own “Manifesto” of 1890 that proclaimed the Church would no longer perform plural marriages. Besides, the Senate and the nation wanted to know if the Mormon Church would control the mind and vote of Reed Smoot in the Senate, or would he have the freedom to vote according to his own conscience. While it took three years to find out the answers, eventually the Senate and the nation realized that the LDS Church was doing all it could to stem plural marriage even to the point that president Joseph F. Smith issued a “Second Manifesto” on April 6, 1904, prescribing excommunication to any Church member who performed or entered into a new plural marriage.<sup>94</sup> Senator Smoot was successful in convincing his colleagues that he had the freedom and was not a mere puppet of the Church. Flake summarizes what she feels was the “price” the Latter-day Saints paid for acceptance: “In sum, it can be said that the Mormons had figured out how to act more like an American church, a civil religion; the Senate, less like one.”<sup>95</sup> It appears that the “price” the LDS Church paid was conformity or accommodation to the national perception of an American church.

Mormon sociologist Armand L. Mauss assesses Mormonism’s transition as an example of assimilation. He argues that by the 1890s the increasing pressure by American society influenced Mormonism to give up “polygamy, theocracy, and collectivist economic experiments.” In return, “Utah achieved statehood, less harassment, and more toleration.”<sup>96</sup> From his perspective as a sociologist, twentieth-century

---

<sup>94</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, "Manifesto, Second," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 702.

<sup>95</sup> Flake, *Politics of American Religious Identity*.

<sup>96</sup> Armand L Mauss, "Assimilation and Ambivalence: The Mormon Reaction to Americanization," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 1 (1989): 33.

Mormonism has been “conspicuously assimilationist in most respects, . . .”<sup>97</sup> As further evidence of their assimilation, Latter-day Saints have become “super-patriotic, law-abiding citizens.” They participate thoroughly and sincerely in what Mauss describes as “the full spectrum of national social, political, economic, cultural life . . .”<sup>98</sup>

As The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints exits the nineteenth-century and enters the twentieth, as described above, it is a church that has changed and will continue to change as conditions dictate in the new century. Whether we call it a paradigm shift, assimilation, accommodation, transition, or constitutional conversion, all these terms are attempting to describe the changes that occurred with the same religious community. Possibly a good way to summarize the transitioned Mormon Church would be to use the term used by historian Gustive O. Larson, “Americanization.”<sup>99</sup> Larson asserts that to get the Utah Territory with its Mormon majority ready for statehood the federal government had to “Americanize” Utah “socially, economically, and politically in preparation for admission to the Union.” Larson defines the “Americanization” process as “a demand for undivided loyalty to the United States government, for the acceptance of the country’s democratic processes under the Constitution, including the separation of church and state.”<sup>100</sup> At the same time it required the abandonment of certain political, economic, and social practices (polygamy). The result was the “Americanization” of the Utah Territory as well as the “Americanization” of the Latter-day Saint Church.

### **The Socio-Cultural Milieu of American Society, 1900-1920**

---

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Gustive O. Larson, *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1971), ix.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

In order to understand the socio-cultural milieu of the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, a brief view of the demographics is in order. The population of the country in 1890 was 60 million; in the next ten years it increased to 76 million, making it the fourth largest country in the world (after China, India, and Russia). Its rate of growth was the most rapid of any large nation because of a high birthrate among the native-born as well as the influx of immigrants. The three major historical forces that had transformed America in the 1800s were industrialization, urbanization, and massive immigration.<sup>101</sup> Of the three forces, the most important demographic trend was the rapid urbanization. By the turn of the century, “immigrant populations composed the majority of the population in several of the largest American cities.”<sup>102</sup> Along with the increase in population, there was a rise in economic growth, making America the world’s largest industrial economy. As the United States began the new century, it was a nation transformed.

In considering the socio-cultural milieu of American society in the first two decades of the twentieth-century, I will explore three main issues: schools and education, the effects of World War I on society, and the concept of consumer consumption and leisure. First, is the issue of schools and education. In 1900 as compared to 1870 the number of secondary schools had increased from 100 to more than 6,000. This is indicative of the type of growth of schools during this era; in addition to the increase in schools was the decrease in national illiteracy, from 20 percent to 10 percent.<sup>103</sup> More

---

<sup>101</sup> George Donelson Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*, 4 ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 1-2.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

important than buildings was the increase of the number of students inside the buildings. Looking at high school students, in 1900 there were only 11.4% of teenagers in high school; a decade later the number had risen to 15.4%. An innovation in education during this period was the “junior high school,” with the first one appearing in 1909 and by 1920 there were 400 junior high schools throughout America.<sup>104</sup> By 1920 the number of students in high school had increased to more than 30%.

These increases were impressive, but the reality is that many of those children and adolescents not in school were working; often they were working in undesirable or dangerous conditions. In 1900 the data show that 20% of all children aged ten to fifteen were gainfully employed, which represented a large increase from 1870. Members of the Progressive Movement in 1904 organized the National Child Labor Committee to “publicize and correct the exploitation of children in the wage labor force.”<sup>105</sup> They were successful in getting Congress to pass the Keating-Owen Act to control some of the abuses of child labor. It was later declared unconstitutional, but the reformers were able to expose some of the major problems associated with child labor.

Along with the increases in junior high schools and high schools, during the same period colleges and universities increased in number so that by 1910 there were over 1,000 colleges and universities in America. Much of the growth was in state-supported post-secondary institutions. It was during this era that the first junior or community colleges appeared. Women attending institutions of higher education increased until by

---

<sup>104</sup> Lucy Rollin, *Twentieth-Century Teen Culture by the Decades: A Reference Guide* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

1920 they made up half of those enrolled in college.<sup>106</sup> But the reality was that higher education was often restricted to white males from the middle or upper-middle class. Thelin claims that “college enrollments represented less than 5 percent of the American population of eighteen- to twenty-two-year-olds.”<sup>107</sup>

This increase in the number of college students caught the institutional attention of many church leaders. According to Clarence Shedd of the Yale Divinity School on Religion, with the “rise of large universities—a wholly new thing in American higher education—was a more influential factor in the development of denominational programs than leaders at the time could possibly have realized.”<sup>108</sup> Many church leaders realized that there was a need “in these new large universities for diversity in types of religious ministries . . .” It was during this period that “The Committee of Six” from the Religious Education Association conducted a survey of 432 institutions to determine what types of religious educational opportunities existed on each campus. They published their report in February 1907 entitled “On the State of Religious and Moral Education in the Universities and Colleges of the United States.”<sup>109</sup> What they discovered was that most institutions had some type of chapel service and some institutions had limited religious instruction. The Committee informed its members that there existed a great need as well as a great opportunity for religious education at these institutions, especially the state-supported colleges and universities.

---

<sup>106</sup> Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*: 61.

<sup>107</sup> Thelin, *History of American Higher Education*: 169.

<sup>108</sup> Clarence Prouty Shedd, *The Church Follows Its Students* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 29.

<sup>109</sup> Wallace N Stearns, "The Report of the Committee of Six: Religious and Moral Education in the Universities and Colleges in the United States," *Religious Education* 1, no. 6 (1907).

Returning to public schools including kindergarten to high school, Lawrence A. Cremin calls what happened to American schools during this period the transformation of the school.<sup>110</sup> He claims that through the reform measures of the progressive education movement that the American school was significantly changed. The intellectual leader of this movement was John Dewey who started his career at the University of Chicago. In 1899 Dewey delivered three lectures to the parents and patrons of the Laboratory School that he and his wife had established in 1894. The lectures were compiled in a book entitled *The School and Society*. His main thesis was the focus of schools had been centered on the teacher rather than the student; Dewey called for the focus to be on the student, a student-centered pedagogy. Some seventeen years later, Dewey published *Democracy and Education*, which Cremin claims contains the “most comprehensive statement of the progressive education movement.”<sup>111</sup> Dewey believed that the classroom was a laboratory of real life, and in the school students should learn democracy through experience. He felt that the aim of education was to change the behaviors, perceptions, and insights of individual human beings. His principles of pedagogy were adopted and popularized by his many followers. Dewey and the educators who accepted principles of progressive education had a profound effect on the transformation of the school.

Another profound force that changed the milieu of American society was its involvement in what was originally called the “Great War.” Currently it is known as World War I. Historian George D. Moss asserts that “The war experience had a profound

---

<sup>110</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*, First ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

effect on American lives and institutions.”<sup>112</sup> Those most directly affected were the 2 million men who were sent overseas to fight in France. Their lives were changed forever. Almost 20 percent of the draftees were immigrants. Moss describes the typical American soldier (called “doughboys”): he was “a draftee, twenty-two years old, white, single, and with a seventh-grade education.”<sup>113</sup> Approximately 400,000 African American men volunteered or were drafted. Because segregation was practiced in general American society, it was practiced the same way in the military. Thousands of women as well volunteered for military service, working as nurses, clerks, and telephone operators. When the fighting was concluded in 1918, the soldiers returned to a changed America. Some had become disillusioned with the idealistic promises of “making the world safe for democracy.” Others turned from their religious faith and became atheists and skeptics. Some of the Progressives lost their passion for reform and accepted the status quo. The Great War changed America.

Ernest L. Bogart, Professor of Economics of the University of Illinois, prepared a report for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 1920 entitled the “Direct and Indirect Costs of the Great World War.” He published a summary of his findings in *The Outlook* in the January 7, 1920, issue. Using the most modern economic models of his day, Bogart attempted to figure out the “human cost” of the war, including both the soldier and the civilian casualties. He concluded that the war “cost the world a staggering total of \$337,946,179,657, which is equally divided between direct and indirect costs.”<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup> Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*: 103.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 98-99.

<sup>114</sup> Henry L. Sweinhart, "The 'Human Cost' of the World War," *The Outlook*, January 7, 1920, 42.



He called the figures “both incomprehensible and appalling,” yet the total cost of the war “do[es] not take into account the effect of the war on life, human vitality, economic well-being, ethics, morality, or other phases of human relationships and activities which have been disorganized and injured.”<sup>115</sup> Indeed, the Great World War affected American society in significant ways.

A final factor that was exerting a strong influence upon American society was that of consumption and leisure in the consumer society. The American economy in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century was centered on the production of capital goods: large machinery, railroad cars, steel rails, etc. By the turn of the century there was an intentional shift from capital goods to consumer goods. To display this cornucopia of consumer goods, elegant department stores, like Macy’s in New York City, were built in downtown areas of large cities. For people in small towns or rural areas, the mail-order catalog stores, like Montgomery Ward and Sears and Roebuck, provided a valuable shopping service. The consumer goods consisted of new household appliances—especially the vacuum cleaner and the washing machine—new fashions, and new personal care products. All these made life easier and more enjoyable for most Americans.

One of the favorite new products that had a profound effect on work and leisure was Henry Ford’s Model T. He wanted to produce a car that was economical enough so that it was in the price range of most Americans. When he introduced the Model T in 1908 it had a price tag of \$850. Many Americans fell in love with the automobile and the

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

options it offered them. By 1923, Ford could offer the Model T for \$290; at that price, he sold more than 15 million cars before 1927.<sup>116</sup>

With the prosperity that came during the war and with the many new household appliances, Americans had time for leisure. According to historian Maureen A. Flanagan, “Leisure was becoming a public, commercial activity, and Americans were consuming it as fast as they could.”<sup>117</sup> What were Americans doing with their leisure time? A very popular activity was dancing; many public dance halls, some so large that they could hold as many as 3000 people, were built in the large cities. Closely associated with the dance halls were the amusement parks. Adolescents seemed to enjoy meeting new people at the amusement park, a type of urban dating. Inexpensive nickelodeon theaters appeared in cities and towns throughout the nation. For sports, “Baseball emerged in the Progressive Era as the first mass professional spectator sport.”<sup>118</sup> In many of these leisure activities there was an undercurrent of “changing ideas about sexuality and the proper behavior . . .;”<sup>119</sup> previously, males and females had separate worlds, but the new culture was allowing the two to meet at dance halls, amusement parks, baseball stadiums, and there enjoy each other’s company. A new milieu of interacting was developing and the leisure venues and activities facilitated this new interaction.

### **Concerns of the LDS Church about the American Society from 1900-1920**

Having briefly described the socio-cultural context of American society in the first two decades of the twentieth-century, what concerns would the LDS Church leaders

---

<sup>116</sup> Rollin, *Twentieth-Century Teen Culture by the Decades*: 3.

<sup>117</sup> Maureen A. Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s-1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 184.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

have? It may be a surprise to some that the Latter-day Saints permit and even enjoy dancing. Throughout the history of the Church, dancing has been permitted and encouraged as a wholesome activity. The concern is not the dancing per se, but the style of dancing, the clothing worn by the participants, the environment of the dance hall, the possible content of the lyrics of the songs played, and the possible activities after the dance.

Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, shared with the general membership of the Church his concern for the dress and social practices of many of the young people in the Church. Published in the December issue of the *Improvement Era* in 1916, President Joseph F. Smith wrote, “For months past it has been noted in all parts of the Church that some of the social practices, particularly in matters of dress and dancing, need to be reformed.”<sup>120</sup> He noted that for some time presiding authorities had addressed this same issue from the pulpit, but from his perspective it was not solving the problem. “We complain that our daughters go, shall I say, half-naked before the public. It is an outrage, and should not be tolerated by Latter-day Saints under any conditions.”<sup>121</sup> He had encouraged all the auxiliary organizations of the Church to work in a united way to help with this issue, but he felt that “It is the home influences that, above all others, should direct in moral, social and dress reforms.”<sup>122</sup> And in the home, President Smith felt that the mothers of the Church should accept the

---

<sup>120</sup> Joseph F. Smith, "Dress and Social Practices," *Improvement Era*, December 1916, 172.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

greatest responsibility for dress reform because they “are the managers, the exemplars, in this matter.”<sup>123</sup>

The Church’s concern about dress and dancing was only symptomatic of the larger concern that the leaders felt would be the result of improper dress and inappropriate dancing, the sin of unchastity. After addressing the issue of proper dress and dancing standards in 1916, a year later President Joseph F. Smith shared his concern in an article entitled, “Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age.”<sup>124</sup> He wrote the article not only for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but at the request of the Newspaper Enterprise Association of San Francisco, California; it was published nationwide.

For the Latter-day Saint audience, the article appeared in the Church’s magazine, the *Improvement Era* for June 1917. In the spirit of Progressive reforms, Smith argued that “When citizens can be taught to live right lives. The grandeur and perpetuity of the nation will be assured.”<sup>125</sup> He asserted that instead of new laws or governmental reforms, “the crying need of mankind is individual reformation.”<sup>126</sup> The area for individual reformation that Smith advocated was in the area of sexual immorality. From his perspective, “No more loathsome cancer disfigures the body and soul of society today than the frightful affliction of sexual sin.”<sup>127</sup> He shared his feelings about how marriage was ordained of God and under the conditions of marriage the lawful association of the sexes had God’s approval. Smith condemned the “double standard of morals for the

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> ———, “Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age,” *Improvement Era*, June 1917, 738.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

sexes” and advocated one single standard for both with complete fidelity in marriage and abstinence until marriage. He concluded the article by referring to some of the contributing factors in sexual sin:

The current and common custom of indecency in dress, the flood of immoral fiction in printed literature, in the drama, and notably in moving picture exhibitions, the toleration of immodesty in every-day conversation and demeanor, are doing deadly work in the fostering of soul-destroying vice.<sup>128</sup>

As the movie industry developed, the LDS Church had strong misgivings about some of the themes and activities portrayed on the screen. Flanagan asserts that the movie theaters tried to create a female-friendly place where mothers could bring their children. The issue was not the theater, “But movies themselves presented new images of sex and sexuality: romance, flirtation, glamour, and sexual intrigue were common themes.”<sup>129</sup> The Mormon leadership would classify much of the content of the movies at that time as unacceptable for their members; they would classify it a type of worldliness that they would advise their members to avoid.

A second concern did not deal with worldliness, but with the disillusionment and skepticism that accompanied the ending of World War I. The Church had a concern about some of the general trends of American society towards agnosticism and atheism. The leaders reassured their members that the war had brought terrible death and destruction, but it was not because of God (as some blamed God for the evil of the war), but because of the evil intentions in the hearts of men. In his address to the general membership of the Church in general conference in 1918, President Joseph F. Smith said, “I do not want this

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 742.

<sup>129</sup> Flanagan, *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s-1920s*: 185.

congregation, . . . to conceive the idea, or to entertain it for one moment, that the true and living God . . . is in any degree responsible for the carnage, the bloodshed, the crime and infamy that is today being perpetrated because of war, or any other cause, throughout the world. God is not responsible for it.”<sup>130</sup> He reasoned that God loved peace, not war; because some nations exercised their freedom to pursue their wicked course, the war was the result. The war was also having an opposite effect on some people, rather than turning them away from God, it was helping some to turn to God. President Smith encouraged members of the Church to remain faithful to their values and beliefs and to remain orthodox in their thinking.

Related to the Church’s concern about members and other Americans maintaining their belief and faith in God, was a concern about the rising generation of young people and their attitudes and commitment to their belief in God. James H. Leuba, a professor of psychology and pedagogy in Bryn Mawr College, published his psychological study of religion in 1912. In the book Professor Leuba studied the origin, function and future of religion and made some claims about the status of religion that caught the attention of many religious leaders. According to Leuba, “One of the results of the scientific and philosophical activity of the past century has been to convince the best informed among the theologians who have remained Christians in the traditional sense of the word, that science and metaphysics are not the allies but the enemies of their beliefs.”<sup>131</sup> He claimed that “modern knowledge has made the traditional religions, beliefs, and practices

---

<sup>130</sup> Joseph F. Smith, "God Neither Designs nor Is the Cause of Wickedness and Crime," *Conference Report*, April 7, 1918, 169-70.

<sup>131</sup> James Henry Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion: Its Origin, Function, and Future* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 207.

inacceptable.”<sup>132</sup> A final claim that leaders in science, literature, and even religion, rejected the “traditional Christian belief in a Divine Father in direct communication with man” was especially worrisome for the Latter-day Saint leaders.<sup>133</sup>

Professor Leuba published a book four years later in which he explored the beliefs of college students with regards to two basic doctrines of Christianity: the existence of God and the reality of immortality. In commenting about his sample, Leuba claimed that he surveyed students in a “college of high rank and of moderate size” that was “assuredly as religious as that of the average American college.”<sup>134</sup> When he surveyed the students about their beliefs in immortality, Leuba was surprised at the high number of upper classmen who did not believe in immortality and the number who were indifferent to it. The number of juniors and seniors who were unable to profess a belief in immortality was 35 percent. He concluded from the survey that there was “a very profound change now taking place in the conviction of our educated young people regarding a belief usually considered vital to Christianity.”<sup>135</sup> After analyzing all the results of his survey, Leuba shared what he called his “deepest impression”:

The deepest impression left by the records is that, so far as religion is concerned, our students are groveling in darkness. Christianity, as a system of belief, has utterly broken down, and nothing definite, adequate, and convincing has taken its place. Their beliefs, when they have any, are superficial and amateurish in the extreme. There is no generally acknowledged authority; each one believes as he can, and few seem disturbed at being unable to hold the tenets of the churches.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>134</sup> ———, *The Belief in God and Immortality: A Psychological, Anthropological and Statistical Study* (Boston: Sherman, French and Company, 1916), 214.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 213.

This was quite an indictment of the status of Christianity which the survey of a sample of American college students in the second decade of the twentieth-century exposed.

Leaders of the Church had more evidence that something needed to be done in religious education in order to build or maintain the religious beliefs of college students.

Another area of concern was the issue of the consumption of alcohol and its prohibition. It was during this time period (1917) that Congress passed the Eighteenth Amendment. It was not ratified until two years later, but since 1835 the Latter-day Saints had been teaching that “strong drinks” (meaning alcoholic beverages) were not good for man and should not be used “for the body.” The official acceptance of this doctrine of not using alcohol was ratified by the Church in general conference in 1851. The First Presidency informed the nation that “With the purpose of the Prohibition measures we have complete sympathy. . . . The position of the Church with reference to the use of intoxicants and other body poisons is well known.”<sup>137</sup>

A final concern for the Church was in the area of ethical behavior. Latter-day Saints believe in honesty and integrity and want their families and communities to behave that way. When the First Presidency received reports about “lawlessness, immorality, and graft” in Salt Lake City, they immediately responded with this plea: “We call upon all members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world to honor the laws of God, and obey and uphold the laws of the land; and we appeal to good

---

<sup>137</sup> James R. Clark, ed. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916-1934*, 6 vols., vol. 5 (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1971), 310.



men and women everywhere . . . to join us in an effort . . . to be a light to the world, a loyal, law-abiding, God-fearing nation.”<sup>138</sup>

### **A Summary of Latter-day Saint Schools from 1900-1920**

Most of the schools and educational programs established in the nineteenth-century continued on into the first two decades of the twentieth century. According to a group of educational researchers from BYU, “By 1920, educational opportunities for members of the LDS faith abounded in the state.”<sup>139</sup> The academy movement, although scaled down from its original numbers, was still a secondary school option. The Religion Class movement, originally established in 1890, continued to provide religious training for elementary school children. BYU was increasing in size and when it was made a university in 1903 it increased in academic stature. In 1912 the high school seminary program, originally called the “theological seminary” program, was inaugurated. From 1900 to 1920, the Church was able to support most of the educational institutions that it had originally started. It is when the Church reached the 1920s and the accompanying economic downturns that it had to reevaluate its financial commitment to education. Historian Thomas G. Alexander provides a useful comparison in order to understand LDS education during that era: “The course of the church educational system from 1900 to 1930 resembled nothing quite so much as a balloon. Expanding during the period to

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 258-59.

<sup>139</sup> Scott C Esplin, E. Vance Randall, A. LeGrand Richard, and Clifford T. Mayes, "Education in Transition: L.D.S. (Mormon) Educational Change within American Society, 1888-1933," in *American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting* (2008), 20.

1920, it shrank rapidly during the 1920s as the church faced renewed financial problems caused in large part by the depression of 1919-1921, . . .”<sup>140</sup>

In the next chapter, we will look at the socio-cultural milieu of the 1920s as a context in understanding the establishment of the IRM. We will then look at how and why the Church began the IRM.

---

<sup>140</sup> Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition*: 157-58.

### **Chapter 3: The Founding of the First Institute of Religion at the University of Idaho, Moscow**

“. . . I say that this objective, as I see it, is to enable our young people attending the colleges to make the necessary adjustments between the things they have been taught in the Church and the things they are learning in the university, to enable them to become firmly settled in their faith as members of the Church. . . . We should, therefore, continually hold before our minds that we want to hold them in the Church, make them active, intelligent, sincere Latter-day Saints. We want to keep them from growing cold in the faith and indifferent to their obligations as Church members. We want to help them to see it is perfectly reasonable and logical to be really sincere Latter-day Saints.”

--Joseph F. Merrill, Commissioner of Church Education, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1928.

#### **The Socio-Cultural Milieu of American Society in the 1920s**

As the American people transitioned from war to peace, they were ready to return to “normalcy” in the postwar era of the 1920s. During the next decade there would be major changes in American society. In attempting to explain how and why the LDS Church started a college religious education program half way through the decade, it is necessary to look at what was happening socially and culturally to the American people. My thesis is that the LDS Church leaders perceived what they thought were danger signals, specifically, the revolution in manners and morals within the socio-cultural milieu of American society. To combat what they considered evil trends in morals and manners, specifically the “sexual revolution” that removed restrictions of sexual relations among singles that were impacting the college-aged youth of the Church, the LDS Church took the initiative to do something about them. In 1926 the Church leaders sent a

representative to the University of Idaho (hereafter U of I) “to study the situation and tell us what the Church should do for Latter-day Saint students attending state universities.”<sup>1</sup>

### **The Most Important Concern of the LDS Church Leaders: The Revolution in Manners and Morals**

Probably the most alarming trend for the LDS Church leaders was, in the words of journalist Frederick Lewis Allen, the “revolution in manners and morals.”<sup>2</sup> Allen describes the revolution as a break from the traditional moral code that Americans had followed for years. It had guided American behavior for men and women for decades. During the twenties the sexual revolution became one of the dominant themes of the decade. Historian Geoffrey Perrett claims that “the sexual liberty of the Twenties is nothing less than amazing when compared with the sexual repression only a decade or so earlier.”<sup>3</sup> Fass agrees that the change in sexual behavior in the twenties was a “turning point, a critical juncture between the strict double standard of the age of Victoria and the permissive sexuality of the age of Freud.”<sup>4</sup> David P. Setran describes the revolution in morals as it was practiced by college students. He argues that “Students of the ‘Roaring 20s,’ . . . were increasingly liberated from the moral strictures that had once anchored the Protestant conscience.”<sup>5</sup> He contends that the students involved in drinking and sexual exploration were rebelling against the Victorian codes of conduct. For historian William

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," in *The Joint Oral History Project, Brigham Young University Alumni Association Emeritus Club* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Archives, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, 1982), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's* (New York: Harper & Row, 1931), 76.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Perrett, *America in the Twenties: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 156.

<sup>4</sup> Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 260.

<sup>5</sup> David P. Setran, *The College "Y": Student Religion in the Era of Secularization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 186.

E. Leuchtenburg the revolution in morals of the 1920s was “the disintegration of traditional American values . . . [and] was reflected in a change in manners and morals that shook American society to its depths.”<sup>6</sup> This revolution away from the traditional moral code, i.e., couples waited to engage in sexual relations until they were legally married (and usually by a religious authority), was very disturbing to the leaders of the LDS Church. I classify their concern about society as a desire to avoid worldliness.

### **The 1920s from Two Contemporaneous Accounts**

In an attempt to capture some of the “spirit of the times” of the 1920s, I turn to authors who were eye witnesses to the historical, social, and cultural events of that decade. George Albert Coe, considered by many as the “father of religious education movement,” became associated with the Religious Education Association from its very inception in 1903.<sup>7</sup> In 1924 while teaching pedagogy at Teachers College, Columbia University, Coe wrote a book with an intriguing title, *What Ails Our Youth?*<sup>8</sup> From the outset he defines what he means by youth: “By ‘our young people’ is meant Americans of both sexes who are in the adolescent period, particularly those of secondary-school and college age.”<sup>9</sup> In his “Foreword” Coe quotes two critics from Eastern philosophies, using the term “oriental critics,” who believed: “‘The seed that your Western civilization has sown is sprouting in your youths; they are not especially perverse—they merely show the

---

<sup>6</sup> William E Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32*, ed. Daniel J. Boorstin, The Chicago History of American Civilization (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 158.

<sup>7</sup> Helen Allan Archibald, "George A. Coe," Biola University, [www2.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=geroge\\_coe#author-info](http://www2.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=geroge_coe#author-info).

<sup>8</sup> George A. Coe, *What Ails Our Youth?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

defects of your whole system of life.”<sup>10</sup> Coe asserts that the Eastern critics were probably correct in their assessment of American young people. Coe summarizes the “faults” of the young people that he claims “everybody notices:”

craze for excitement; immersion in the external and the superficial; lack of reverence and of respect; disregard for reasonable restraints in conduct and for reasonable reticence in speech; conformity to mass sentiment—‘going along with the crowd’; lack of individuality; living merely in the present, and general purposelessness.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, Coe argued that even among college students “there is a dearth of intellectual interests. Dawdling is general, and the most absorbing occupations are recreation and athletics.”<sup>12</sup>

In explaining why the youth were ailing, Coe investigated two important institutions: education and religion. His investigation of education led him to the conclusion that education as manifested in the secondary schools and colleges in the United States had three major problems. First, was the slowness of education to adjust and change to world conditions. Coe claims, “A rapidly changing world, and slowly changing schools and colleges—this is a fact with which we have to reckon.”<sup>13</sup> Second, he criticized the “neglect of values” as an important oversight in education. He asserts that schools and colleges have as a main function of getting “departmentalized knowledge into the heads of students . . .”<sup>14</sup> Coe argues, coming from a religious perspective, that the supreme function of the schools is to have students focus on what he calls the “education for the vocation of living,” an orientation of analyzing the values of

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 24.

our civilization and using sciences and industry to “enrich the spirit of all men.”<sup>15</sup> Third, Coe is critical of “the entrance into educational dynamics of the captains of industry; themselves largely without academic training or traditions.”<sup>16</sup> He interpreted their entrance into education as a step backwards and not progress. His conclusion about education and its effect of the youth: “Why are our youth ailing? Partly because the spirit of our ailing industrial order has infected our colleges and universities.”<sup>17</sup>

Coe analyzed the second institution of importance in the 1920s influencing American youth, religion. Here, again, he found major issues that would explain why the youth were ailing. One of the major problems he discovered was that religious organizations were not focused on meeting the needs of modern youth.<sup>18</sup> Coe interpreted this lack of meeting the needs of the youth as having its root cause in that “the Christian religion itself is ailing, . . .”<sup>19</sup> He saw in the Christianity of the 1920s a religious organization that was not a “living, growing religion” but one that had drifted from its important mission to meet the needs of its members. A third problem Coe found in religion was the growth of state schools and colleges so that church academies and colleges had to compete for students and in so doing the church schools emphasized secular subjects and not religious instruction. Coe concluded, “Thus religion was pushed into a corner by the pressure of State education.”<sup>20</sup> I would classify Coe’s conclusion as marginalization of religion, usually the result of secularization.

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 62.

Coe advocated a type of “social gospel” that called for young people who wanted to be truly “well-educated” to concentrate on what he calls “the vocation of living.” For Coe, the “vocation of living” is a religious vocation that is “inclusive of every individual and of every occupation.” He believed that “We are called, . . . to co-operate with God in the creation of a satisfactory society. . . . the simple conduct and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth show the way for social aspiration and for real social growth.”<sup>21</sup>

A second book popular in the 1920s that looked at young people and attempted to explain what was happening to them in their socio-cultural environment was *The Revolt of Modern Youth*.<sup>22</sup> Benjamin Lindsey was a judge for over twenty-six years; he wrote from personal observation “on things that actually happened.”<sup>23</sup> In the “Preface” of his book, Judge Lindsey claims that what he presents is a “truthful picture of certain aspects of American social life, as they have consistently and continually revealed themselves to me in the Juvenile and Family Court of Denver.”<sup>24</sup> He argued that what he witnessed in his courtroom had application to every town and city in the United States. Judge Lindsey’s dealings were with adolescents and what he reported was about their rebellion. He described it in these words: “This involves an account of the growing signs of rebellion on the part of modern youth; a rebellion which youth’s instinctive reaction against our system of taboos, tribal superstitions, intolerances and hypocrisies.”<sup>25</sup> He added that this rebellion or revolt was unique:

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin B. Lindsey, and Wainwright Evans, *The Revolt of Modern Youth* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., vi.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 18.



Not only is this revolt from old standards of conduct taking place, but it is unlike any revolt that has ever taken place before. Youth has always been rebellious; youth has always shocked the older generation . . . . But this is different. It has the whole weight and momentum of a new scientific and economic order behind it. It has come in an age of speed and science; an age when women vote and can make their own living; an age in which the Hell Fire has lost its hold. In the past the revolt of youth always turned out to be a futile gesture. It never brought much change. But now the gun is loaded. These boys and girls can do what boys and girls never were able to do in the past. They can live up to their manifesto, and nothing can prevent them. The external restraints, economic restraints that were once so potent, have gone never to return;<sup>26</sup>

Judge Lindsey felt that some of these young people were justified in their rebellion; in some cases they were rebelling against what he calls “tribal superstitions, intolerances and hypocrisies.” One of his greatest complaints was with parents and school officials, teachers and administrators, who “believed that the way to make people be good, and to do this rather than that, is to make them afraid and keep them in ignorance.”<sup>27</sup> He cited case study after case study of boys and girls (Lindsey’s language for adolescents) who got in trouble with school officials and later with the criminal justice system because of their ignorance about sexual matters. He believed that often through education that these young people could be given the “spiritual nourishment and the intellectual enlightenment” so that they could make better decisions.

Whether justified or not in their rebellion, Judge Lindsey documented the large number of cases of young people who ended up in his courtroom. He found a kind of “progression” into sexual experience that was common: of the youth who attended parties and dances and rode together in automobiles, “more than 90 percent indulge in hugging

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 29.

and kissing.” In the next stage, of those who began with the hugging and kissing, “At least 50 per cent . . . do not restrict themselves to that, but go further, and indulge in other sex liberties which, by all conventions, are outrageously improper.”<sup>28</sup> At the final level, “fifteen to twenty-five per cent of those who begin with the hugging and kissing eventually ‘go the limit.’”<sup>29</sup>

As regards to the number of high school boys who were sexually active, Lindsey cited as his source a “crack athlete” who claimed that “fully ninety per cent of these boys known to him more or less intimately have had sex experience by the time they finish school.” The judge felt that 90 per cent might be too high of an estimate; he felt that “50 per cent is a safe and conservative estimate for all classes of high-school boys averaged together.”<sup>30</sup> These kinds of numbers of sexually active high school boys justified Lindsey’s claim that there was a “revolt” in the 1920s of the then “modern youth.”

### **American Society of the 1920s as Presented in Representative Articles from Popular Magazines of that Era**

Several magazine articles that appeared in the 1920s documented the activities and behaviors of American youth. If the author was a “progressive,” the youth, or society’s perception of the youth, was somewhat positive or neutral; if the author’s perspective was a “traditionalist,” one who espoused American traditional values—emphasizing moral behavior based on Protestant Christianity—the article or report tended to be negative. As historian Paula S. Fass observed, “In the highly dramatic perceptions

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 56-62.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 66.

of a dramatic era, youth was either damned or beautiful.”<sup>31</sup> A sampling of some of the articles from the popular magazines of the era will illustrate how American society was viewed from these different perspectives.

At one extreme of the spectrum were the Fundamentalists who represented some of the most conservative of the Christian groups of the 1920s. They placed great importance upon five doctrines that they called the “Five Points”: “the infallibility of the Bible, Christ’s Virgin Birth, his Substitutionary Atonement, Resurrection, and Second Coming.”<sup>32</sup> According to W. B. Riley, the president of the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association organized in 1919, one of the core beliefs of the Fundamentalists was their strong belief in the Bible. He lists as the first of nine points of the “greater Christian doctrines” the doctrine of the inerrancy of scripture: “We believe in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as verbally inspired of God, and inerrant in the original writings, and that they are of supreme and final authority in faith and life.”<sup>33</sup> Fundamentalists viewed Modernism in any of its forms as the antithesis of true Christianity, and any attempts at “higher criticism” of the Bible as heresy as well as studying the Bible as literature considered a “glaring heresy.”<sup>34</sup> One of their most important missions was to “save American civilization from the dangers of evolutionism.”<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Fass, *American Youth in the 1920's*: 16.

<sup>32</sup> Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931*, ed. Lewis P. Curtis, vol. 59, Yale Historical Publications (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954), 13.

<sup>33</sup> W. B. Riley, "The Faith of the Fundamentalists," *Current History*, June 1927, 434.

<sup>34</sup> William Cobb, "The West Point of Fundamentalism," *American Mercury*, January 1929, 109.

<sup>35</sup> George M Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.

One of the strongholds of Fundamentalism was the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago; in fact, in 1929 William Cobb called it the “West Point” of Fundamentalism. The school was founded by Dwight L. Moody in 1886. The mission of the Institute was to “educate, direct, encourage, maintain and send forth Christian workers, Bible readers, gospel singers, teachers and evangelists competent to effectually preach and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>36</sup> Moody kept his evangelical message simple and positive. He conceived of the idea of summarizing his central doctrines as “The Three R’s”: “Ruin by sin, Redemption by Christ, and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>37</sup> Moody denounced the “four great temptations” prevalent in American society: “(1) the theater, (2) disregard of the Sabbath, (3) Sunday newspapers, and (4) atheistic teachings, including evolution.”<sup>38</sup> The theologians at the school believed that American society was not improving, but was getting worse and worse every day. They cited as their evidence women’s styles, women smoking, and the “growth of apostasy, atheism, and indifference.”<sup>39</sup>

Evangelist Dr. Vom Bruch, a graduate of the Bible Institute, spoke out on what he perceived to be the evils of the day: playing cards, “The card pack is the infidel’s dictionary, the blasphemer’s lexicon and the harlot’s handbook;”<sup>40</sup> attending the theater, condemned by Vom Bruch as “an institution it is unclean. Both place and plays are bad;”<sup>41</sup> seeing movies which reflected the evil influences of American society; and

---

<sup>36</sup> Cobb, “The West Point of Fundamentalism,” 104.

<sup>37</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*: 35.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Cobb, “The West Point of Fundamentalism,” 111.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

dancing, which received his greatest condemnation: “. . .The scant, low-necked clinging dresses of the women, and the close mingling of the sexes, can in no sense be conducive to morality.”<sup>42</sup> From the Fundamentalist perspective, American society was immoral and evil and “in the end, the world will become so very wicked that the Lord will have to come down, meet His saints and martyrs, clean up the whole place, and take personal charge of it.”<sup>43</sup>

*The Forum* was a monthly magazine published in New York that often presented two opposing views on a contemporary topic of interest. In its July 1926 issue it asked this question: “Has Youth Deteriorated?” The publisher invited two authors to answer the question. Anne Temple wrote the affirmative response to the question as well as her explanation. Generally, she agreed with the Fundamentalists that American society, and especially American youth, had deteriorated. Temple disagreed with those who believed in what the author called the “amiable platitude” that “our young people are not so bad, after all.”<sup>44</sup> She felt strongly that American youth had deteriorated.

Concerning college life, she argued that the colleges of the 1920s did not possess the same general conditions that had existed two or three generations ago. To support her argument, Temple cited the example of her own college days. Of the eleven girls living in her dormitory, only five were “pure” and the other six had “strayed” from the path of purity and virtue. She argued that the young people had become the advocates of the “new morality.” This new morality meant that “old standards are now being laughed at

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>44</sup> Anne Temple, “Has Youth Deteriorated? Yes: I--Reaping the Whirlwind,” *The Forum*, July 1926, 22.

and called blind; conventions have been dispensed with; obligations are scoffed at; and ‘Liberate the Libido’ has become our national motto.”<sup>45</sup> In the conclusion of her article, Temple summarized her opinion about the young people of her day; she felt they had “hurled aside all conventions. Accepted standards are ‘nil’ with us.”<sup>46</sup> Because of their actions, young people of her era had “sowed the wind; we are reaping the whirlwind.”<sup>47</sup>

Anne Temple was not alone in her description and condemnation of young people of the 1920s. Mary Agnes Hamilton agreed with Temple’s opinion that the youth had lost something important in her article appearing in *Harper’s Magazine* in July 1927.<sup>48</sup> Hamilton’s title, “Nothing Shocks Me” gives some indication of her opinion of young people; because they had accepted a new morality and new manners, they had lost important inhibitions and social restraints to the degree that “nothing” was shocking to them.

In her article, Hamilton relates the experience of a chance meeting in New York with Hester Johnson, an acquaintance of some fifteen years earlier. Hamilton is taken aback how her friend, whom she described as “the shyest, most reticent, most completely inhibited young thing,”<sup>49</sup> had lost all of her shyness and shared an incident in mixed company that would have been “shocking” years earlier. Now a “new woman,” Hester was willing to share what once was confined to “smoking rooms” among men. After relating the incident, Hamilton confronted Hester to discover what had caused such a change in her; she related her tales of romance and disappointments and ended with these

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Mary Agnes Hamilton, "Nothing Shocks Me," *Harper's Magazine*, July 1927, 150.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 151.

words: “Nothing shocks me now. I almost wish it could. It would be a new sensation—and they are so hard to get.”<sup>50</sup>

Hamilton continues the argument of the article by condemning the so-called “emancipation of speech” which had resulted in “the one-time unmentionables have become the staple of conversation.”<sup>51</sup> She asserted that contemporary conversation was filled with “expletives of the farmyard, the ring, the stable, and the trenches, almost to the exclusion of all others.”<sup>52</sup> From her perspective, the change from “everything shocks me” to “nothing shocks me” had been a rapid social change; she attributed the cause of the change to “Our standards, our theories, above all, our values have sunk and broken under their [the “facts” as presented in “descriptive realism” of the stage and of the novel] weight.”<sup>53</sup> She concluded her article with the accusation of cowardice on the behalf of parents and adults: “Because we lack the energy to say that anything is wrong, we cannot achieve the vision of anything that is right.”<sup>54</sup>

One of the direct targets of the ire of many adults during the 1920s was the music that the young people embraced, jazz. One of the most popular of the women’s magazines of that era, the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, took particular aim at jazz, publishing articles in 1921 that condemned it as evil music. Author Anne Shaw Faulkner addressed her article to the parents, warning them that “. . . America is facing a most serious situation regarding its popular music. Welfare workers tell us that never in the history of our land have there been such immoral conditions among young people, . . . the blame is

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 157.

laid on jazz music and its evil influence on the young people of to-day.”<sup>55</sup> Faulkner claimed that “Never before have such outrageous dances been permitted in private as well as public ballrooms, and never has there been used for the accompaniment such a strange combination of tone and rhythm as that produced by the dance orchestras of to-day.”<sup>56</sup> The author described jazz as “a strange combination of tone and rhythm,”<sup>57</sup> indeed this new music form seemed “strange” sounding to the author.

In addition to welfare workers, Faulkner cited members of the National Dancing Masters’ Association for their expert opinion in condemning the new music. At their national meeting, they adopted this rule for private dance halls: “Don’t permit vulgar, cheap jazz music to be played. Such music almost forces dancers to use jerky half-steps, and invites immoral variations. It is useless to expect to find refined dancing when the music lacks all refinement, . . .”<sup>58</sup>

In this article, Faulkner’s characterization of jazz certainly contained definite racial overtones. She argued that syncopation, an important element of jazz, was “in music of the folk who have been held for years in political subjection. It is, therefore, an expression in music of the desire for freedom which has been denied to its interpreter. . . . it was the natural expression of the American Negroes and was used by them as the accompaniment for their bizarre dances and cakewalks.”<sup>59</sup> Faulkner connected jazz with voodoo and argued that it originally accompanied “the voodoo dancer, stimulating the

---

<sup>55</sup> Anne Shaw Faulkner, "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation," *Ladies Home Journal* August 1921, 16.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



half-crazed barbarian to the vilest deeds.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, she claimed that it was used by “other barbaric people to stimulate brutality and sensuality.”<sup>61</sup> She claimed that “many scientists” have demonstrated that jazz “has a demoralizing effect upon the brain . . .”<sup>62</sup>

Her final judgment about jazz:

Jazz disorganizes all regular laws and order; it stimulates to extreme deeds, to a breaking away from all rules and conventions; it is harmful and dangerous, and its influence is wholly bad.<sup>63</sup>

To overcome the evil influence of jazz, Faulkner called for the General Federation of Women’s Clubs to start a campaign against jazz. She recommended this as their national motto: “To Make Good Music Popular, and Popular Music Good.”<sup>64</sup>

The *Ladies Home Journal* published Anne Shaw Faulkner’s article in August 1921; it continued its tirade against jazz with a series of articles authored by John R. McMahon which appeared in the November and December issues of the same magazine. In the November article, McMahon asked the question, “Is American dancing via the jazz route, hellward?”<sup>65</sup> He answered with this reply: “An affirmative answer seems indicated by the facts. We are traveling at a swift gait on the broad and smooth highway which is shown by his Satanic Majesty’s bluebook to be the direct route to hell.”<sup>66</sup> To emphasize his assertion that jazz was leading the young people in the wrong direction, he used the expert opinions of a preacher, biologist, and historian. According to the preacher, jazz

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> John R. McMahon, "Back to Prewar Morals: Toddling to the Pit by the Jazz Route-How New York Sets the Pace," *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1921, 13.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

was the “moral ruin for the people.” He argued that the people were forgetting God and spiritual matters and were “debasing themselves and even wallowing in a mire of material obscenity. They are profaning the temple of the Most High. They are losing their souls.”<sup>67</sup>

The biologist would not comment about people losing their souls, arguing that it was a matter beyond the purview of science, but from his perspective as a scientist he felt that “natural law cannot be violated with impunity either for ourselves or for the next generation.”<sup>68</sup> He defined “hell” as “retrogression of the species,” and “in this sense I agree with any theologian as to the consequences of degrading practices, . . .”<sup>69</sup> He conceded that moral standards did not always coincide with biological laws, but he argued that “any pronounced tendency away from the [moral] code is likely to be biologically destructive.”<sup>70</sup> Hence, the biologist concluded, “In so far as jazz dancing relaxes morality and undermines the institution of the family, it is an element of tremendously evil potentiality.”<sup>71</sup>

McMahon’s third expert witness testimony came from a historian; he argued that “Jazz is a signboard on the road that was traveled by Greece and Rome.”<sup>72</sup> The historian asserted that “Orgies of lewd dancing preceded the downfall of those nations.”<sup>73</sup> Those civilizations were once “strong and clean” but because they became enervated by luxury and perverse practices, they were destroyed.

---

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

In the December 1921 issue of the *Ladies' Home Journal* McMahon published his second article entitled "Unspeakable Jazz Must Go!" The article featured the statements of a Fenton T. Bott, described by the author as "an expert in the dance and a professional dancing master."<sup>74</sup> In addition, he was "director of dance reform" in the American National Association of Masters of Dancing. When McMahon asked Mr. Bott why he felt that jazz was worse than the saloon, he replied:

"Because it affects our young people especially. It is degrading. It lowers the moral standards. Unlike liquor, a great deal of its harm is direct and immediate. . . . The jazz is too often followed by the joy ride. The lower nature is stirred up as a prelude to unchaperoned adventure."<sup>75</sup>

Mr. Bott went on to explain that there was something "bad" about the music itself. He claimed that jazz with its "broken, jerky rhythm make[s] a purely sensual appeal. [It] . . . call[s] out the low and rowdy instinct. All of us dancing teachers know this to be a fact."<sup>76</sup>

Not everyone agreed with the *Ladies' Home Journal* campaign to censor jazz music and a complete prohibition of dancing to jazz. By 1926 many adults had changed their opinion about it. In that year Don Knowlton wrote an article about jazz in which he called the reactions and attitudes of those who "loathed" jazz to be ridiculous. He wrote, "Five years ago it was proper to loathe jazz."<sup>77</sup> He noted that the attitude was now one of praise: "To-day it is the smart thing to hail it as the only truly American contribution to music, and to acclaim it as Art."<sup>78</sup> He felt that the latter attitude was also ridiculous.

---

<sup>74</sup> ———, "Unspeakable Jazz Must Go!," *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1921, 34.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Don Knowlton, "The Anatomy of Jazz," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1926, 578.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

Knowlton argued that jazz had won popularity because of its own intrinsic musical qualities. From his perspective, these were: “firstly, fundamental rhythm; secondly, simple harmonies; thirdly, standardized form.”<sup>79</sup> Knowlton generally praised jazz and acknowledged that it had musical value. “The encouraging thing about jazz is that in its orchestrations it is initiating countless thousands into sound principles of harmony and counterpoint, and thus definitely raising the average level of musical intelligence.”<sup>80</sup> Despite the praise for jazz by mid-decade, nevertheless for many adults, jazz was seen as a negative force in American society and symptomatic of what traditionalists were calling the decline of American culture.

Simultaneously with the outcry of decline and deterioration, there existed individuals who interpreted American society from an opposite perspective. One such author was Reese Carmichael. Writing in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in the May 1921 issue, Carmichael claimed that the label of “those dreadful young persons” was improper; she wrote that it was a “popular myth of the present day.” She looked back at the youth of her day, some twenty years before and came up with this conclusion: “. . . I am bound to confess that I cannot, . . . find any special difference, save in a few non-essential habits.”<sup>81</sup> Carmichael was one of the voices that claimed that the youth of the 1920s were not significantly different from their parents in their youth.

A similar perspective to that of Carmichael's was that of Regina Malone; in *The Forum* article mentioned above that asked “Has Youth Deteriorated?” Malone responded

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 579.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 585.

<sup>81</sup> Reese Carmichael, “Those Dreadful Young Persons: A Popular Myth of the Present Day,” *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1921, 18.

in the negative and added her explanation for her response. She felt that the youth of America had created a “new morality” and new “mores” which were “better adapted to the age that those it has discarded.”<sup>82</sup> She claimed that beneath the accusations of “superficiality,” “nonchalance,” “indifference,” and “ill-breeding” (all of which she felt were untrue) was the “germ of that ageless yearning for improvement” which she felt characterized the youth of every age. She was making the argument that her generation was much like all the past generations of youth—they simply wanted improvement. She referred to the phrase that seemed popular among critics of youth culture, the “fabulous monster.” She asserted that the list of “crimes” of youth were not crimes at all—exhibiting a general independence of thought and action—a disregard of morals—a lack of manners—and a disregard for religion. For Malone, these “crimes” were “The revolt of my generation is the natural and wholesome reaction to an age which evaded nearly every reality. It is the revolt against the patent absurdities of Victorianism.”<sup>83</sup> She justified the new attitude toward sex by explaining that what youth was expressing was “the desire and ability to procreate [which was] the primary function of every human being.”<sup>84</sup> With regards to religion, she admitted that “The younger members of society have thrown religion overboard,—that is, religion as conceived by their elders.”<sup>85</sup> She felt that like other aspects of American society, the youth would find freedom in religious ideas also. She cautioned adults to “pay less attention to the surface signs of the revolt

---

<sup>82</sup> Regina Malone, "Has Youth Deteriorated? No: II.—The Fabulous Monster," *The Forum*, July 1926, 26.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

and more to the good being accomplished by it.”<sup>86</sup> Finally, Malone characterized her generation as “a generation which is constituting the leaven in the rapid development of a new and saner morality.”<sup>87</sup>

While the debate about the moral status of young people continued throughout the 1920s, an editorial appeared in the 1926 *New Republic* which shed some light on the topic with some data from the Children’s Bureau of the United States Bureau of Labor.<sup>88</sup> The editorial began with the usual introduction, “it seems to be an accepted axiom nowadays that our young people are going to the devil.”<sup>89</sup> The editorialist then argued, “most of this lamentation, of course, is based on theory and not on fact.”<sup>90</sup> Citing the data from the Children’s Bureau, it was found that in fourteen of the leading cities in the country delinquency rates were “decidedly *lower* in 1924 or 1925 than in 1915.”<sup>91</sup> The actual number of delinquents below the age of eighteen in proportion to the general population “declined markedly between 1910 and 1923, . . .”<sup>92</sup> Many were condemning the young people, but the data showed that in some ways they seemed to be doing better than often portrayed.

One more voice from the youth came from the pen of John F. Carter, Jr., who wrote an article for the September 1920 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. He entitled his

---

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>88</sup> "Editorial: How Wild Is Wild Youth?," *New Republic: A Journal of Opinion* 46, no. 596 (1926): 318.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

article, "'These Wild Young People' By One of Them."<sup>93</sup> He felt compelled to answer some of the charges leveled at the young people by authors who were writing in "our more conservative magazines" with their "pessimistic descriptions of the younger generation."<sup>94</sup> Carter argued that those writing about his younger generation had little idea what they were writing about. He countered their accusations by first establishing the premise that it was not the youth who had destroyed society because he claimed that "the older generation had certainly pretty well ruined this world before passing it on to us."<sup>95</sup> Second, he confessed that the younger generation was disillusioned because of the "cataclysm which *their* [the older generation] complacent folly engendered."<sup>96</sup> To the accusation that the younger generation was not going to accomplish anything worthwhile, he wrote that "all my friends are working and working very hard."<sup>97</sup> And to the criticism that the younger generation lacked chivalry and modesty, Carter countered that the younger generation was "busy . . . We have to make the most of our time. We actually haven't got so much time for the noble procrastination of modesty or for the elaborate rigmarole of chivalry, and little patience for the lovely formulas of an ineffective faith."<sup>98</sup> He admitted, sarcastically, that "we [the younger generation] are a pretty bad lot, but has not that been true of every preceding generation?"<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> John F. Carter, Jr. , "'These Wild Young People' By One of Them," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1920, 301.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

Judging from the variety of opinions expressed by authors in these various popular magazines, their viewpoints seemed like a giant kaleidoscope—some authors condemning American society and the youth that it had produced, and others defending the younger generation and praising their positive characteristics. But, just as a kaleidoscope reflects many patterns, so it was with the many perspectives and opinions. I have chosen to conclude this section with three final authors, all of whom sounded voices of concern about American society.

The first of these is James Truslow Adams, writing halfway through the decade he focused on the topic of “Our Dissolving Ethics.”<sup>100</sup> He felt that in the post-war era the United States had found a scapegoat for its troubles and problems and the scapegoat was the younger generation. He reasoned that such a conclusion was not fair to the youth—after all, it was the older generation who had created the American society and they should accept that responsibility.

He then referred to two sanctions that helped reinforce ethics: religion and public opinion. For Adams, as more and more young people were attending college, their intellectual fare was completely different than that of their parents. The younger generation was exposed to “higher criticism” of scriptures coupled with the study of comparative religion, which the author interpreted as resulting in “the religious sanction for ethics received a severe blow.”<sup>101</sup> In addition, as the younger generation turned to anthropology with its belief in codes and ethics that emerged differently from specific social and economic conditions, their view of ethics changed. As the youth turned to

---

<sup>100</sup> James Truslow Adams, “Our Dissolving Ethics,” *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1926, 577.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 579.



philosophy, they came in contact with “a world, not of fixed ideas, of eternal verities, but a world where all is in a state of flux.”<sup>102</sup> In contrast to the older generation whose ethics were based on religious sanctions which they considered to be eternal rules, the younger generation’s ethics did not have any “religious sanction which points out any specific rules of conduct.”<sup>103</sup> Their conduct depended on “conditions and not on any eternal rules.”<sup>104</sup> He concluded the article with the admission that “our ethics and their old sanctions are already in dissolution.”<sup>105</sup> The older generation could not blame the youth for the dissolving ethics of American society. He argued that the younger generation had “inherited, perhaps, the biggest mess and biggest problem that was ever bequeathed by one generation to another. Never has the road been wilder or the signposts fewer.”<sup>106</sup> It was this recognition by some of the observers of American society that our ethics had “dissolved” that sounded a harmonic chord with the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They were concerned with their youth being raised in a society that had abandoned its ethical moorings.

The second author is Katherine Fullerton Gerould. In 1920 she published an article entitled “Reflections of a Grundy Cousin,” making reference to a previous article published in the May issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. In that issue a “Mr. Grundy,” a pen name, wrote about “Polite Society” in answering the question, “What is the matter with Society?” In attempting to answer that question, Mr. Grundy explored the idea that the blame for society’s ills had been placed on any one of several groups: on the young men,

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 580.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 581.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 582.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 583.

on the girls, on the men, on the mothers, on the fathers, etc. He concluded that in the end, “the responsibility must be shared by us all.”<sup>107</sup>

In her article, Gerould took exception to Mr. Grundy’s conclusion that we were all equally to blame. She argued, “by making everybody share the blame equally, he relieves any one of very much blame;”<sup>108</sup> she agreed, though, that all had a share of the responsibility. Besides the individuals responsible for the ills of society, she explored what else could be blamed. She repeated the common culprits: it was the war, it was the motor-car, it was the movies, it was the radical intellectuals, it was the luxury of the *nouveaux riches*, and it was prohibition. But for Gerould, the main cause for society’s problems was the “general abandonment of religion.”<sup>109</sup> She explained, “For the abandonment of religion is probably most responsible of all, since it bears a causal relation to most of these other facts.”<sup>110</sup> From her perspective, “when, as a social group, we threw over religion, we threw over—probably without meaning to—most of our everyday moral sanctions.”<sup>111</sup>

The third author is R. E. Hough, editor of *The Mississippi Visitor* (a Presbyterian weekly publication). When the *Literary Digest* asked a cross section of “high-school principals, college presidents, college deans, the editors of college newspapers and periodicals, and also editors or religious weeklies” if they had seen a change in the behavior of young people in a year’s time with regards to “dress, dancing, manners, and

---

<sup>107</sup> Mr. Grundy, "Polite Society," *Atlantic Monthly* 125(1920): 609.

<sup>108</sup> Katherine Fullerton Gerould, "Reflections of a Grundy Cousin," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1920, 157-58.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

general moral standards,” Hough offered his opinion.<sup>112</sup> In his response he employed the metaphor of a levee; he argued:

“There has been a very decided break in the moral levee, and now it looks as if the waves of immorality and indecency of a little while ago have become such a torrent the public has about decided there is no use attempting to report the breach, and get back to the old channel of pre-war standards of living and conduct.”<sup>113</sup>

From his perspective, he viewed the change not in the behavior of the young people—he felt that it was about the same—but in the attitude of the public. He claimed that the general public had become more “tolerant” and “much that shocked the finer sensibilities a few months ago are now regarded as quite the thing to do.”<sup>114</sup>

From the various opinions and perspectives presented in the popular magazines of the 1920s, the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ related most closely to the last three authors. Of all the patterns and reflections from the kaleidoscope of opinions, it was with these final authors that the leaders and members of the Church felt aligned most closely with their own position regarding American society.

### **The Second Concern of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: the Secularization of American Society and the American University**

A second major concern to the LDS Church leaders was the secularization of American society with its accompanying decline in religious faith and activity. Even before the 1920s, historian George D. Moss claims that “The transformation in social life

---

<sup>112</sup> “Personal Glimpses: The Case Against the Younger Generation,” *Literary Digest*, June 17, 1922, 40.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

and culture accompanying the industrial revolution had a major impact on organized religion in the late nineteenth century. The most obvious effect was a rapid secularization of American life.”<sup>115</sup> As reflected in the general society, the same secularization occurred on the college campus. As noted by Dean R. Hoge in his study of religious changes on the American college campus, “In the latter half of the 1920’s observers reported decreases in students’ religious interest and participation.”<sup>116</sup> According to David O. Levine, through secularization traditional Christian religion was replaced; he argues, “Education became the secular religion of twentieth-century American society.”<sup>117</sup> Combining secularization and their concern with avoiding worldliness, the LDS Church leaders found sufficient evidence in the socio-cultural milieu of American society to motivate them to seek a way to reach out to their college-aged youth. They wanted to be able to provide them with the religious education and wholesome social activities so that they could attend state colleges and still maintain their religious beliefs.

### **Introduction: The Direct Precursors of the Institutes of Religion**

In this chapter I will be investigating the central historical question of my study, how did the IRM get started? I propose to narrate and document the actions taken by individuals and institutionally by the Latter-day Saint Church to create and found the first Institute of Religion. As is true of most educational enterprises, the creation of a new educational program combines the ideas, actions, and efforts of many individuals and a

---

<sup>115</sup> George Donelson Moss, *America in the Twentieth Century*, 4 ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000), 35-36.

<sup>116</sup> Dean R. Hoge, *Commitment on Campus: Changes in Religion and Values over Five Decades* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 134.

<sup>117</sup> David O Levine, *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 87.

strong commitment by the sponsoring institution. First, I will review the direct precursors of the Institutes of Religion.

In surveying the history of Latter-day Saint education, there are three educational programs that are the direct forerunners to the IRM. First, is the Religious Class Movement that was started in 1890 in Utah for elementary school children in the first through the ninth grade. In speaking to the members of the Church in General Conference, Anthon H. Lund, Second Counselor to President Joseph F. Smith and a strong advocate for the Religious Class Movement, explained: “The object of these classes is to teach our children what they cannot be taught in the district schools, namely, the principles of the Gospel.”<sup>118</sup> It was designed for children between the ages of seven and fourteen which Lund felt was the opportune time to teach children, for it was a “time when the child’s mind is plastic, and when you can make a lasting impression upon it.”<sup>119</sup> Church leaders did not want “that time to go by without doing something for the spiritual growth of the child; we want to teach our young children faith in Christ, and have them well grounded in His doctrines.”<sup>120</sup> It was discontinued in 1929 when it was merged with the Primary Association program, another children’s religious education program begun in 1878 in Farmington, Utah.<sup>121</sup> Because they shared the same objectives and seemed to cause some rivalry among local Church teachers, the two programs were consolidated into the Primary Association. According to historian D. Michael Quinn, “the goals and

---

<sup>118</sup> Anthon H. Lund, "Intellectual and Religious Development of Children," *Conference Report*, October 1904.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Carol Cornwall Madsen, "Primary," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 949.

institutional concepts established by the Religious Class Movement have been perpetuated in the LDS Seminary and institute system.”<sup>122</sup>

A second program that influenced the eventual creation of the IRM was the Academy program established under the direction of LDS President Wilford Woodruff in 1890 when he called for each stake in the Church to create an “academy,” a secondary school for LDS youth wherein they could be taught the regular secondary curriculum along with LDS theology and doctrine. Woodruff’s call for the academy program represented a reaction to the secular influence of the state high schools which he characterized as “a Godless education.”<sup>123</sup> He justified the academies because the district schools excluded “all teachings of a religious character” and in the academies the students could “increase their feelings of devotion to God and love for His cause, . . .”<sup>124</sup> Eventually some thirty-five academies were established throughout the areas colonized by the Latter-day Saints. Because of increasing costs of maintaining an expanding educational system, the economic downturns of the American economy, and the development and growth of state-sponsored schools, the LDS Church found itself in an untenable financial situation. It had to face the reality of scaling back its educational goals and decided rather than compete with the state school system, it would cooperate with it. The Church kept a few of the academies, but the majority were sold (at nominal prices) or transferred to the state wherein the academy was located. Besides a paradigm

---

<sup>122</sup> D. Michael Quinn, "Utah's Educational Innovation: L.D.S. Religion Classes, 1890-1929," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1975); Setran, *The College "Y": Student Religion in the Era of Secularization*.

<sup>123</sup> James R. Clark, ed. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1833-1964*, 6 vols., vol. 3 (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1966), 196.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

shift from competition to cooperation, there was also a perception shift from “Godless education” to what sociologist Armand L. Mauss calls the “assimilationist mode.”<sup>125</sup> Historian Scott Esplin summarizes the change in educational policy with regards to the Church and the state: “Policy-wise, the Church decided its place was neither to duplicate the programs of the state nor fill their rightful place.”<sup>126</sup> The academy movement with its eventual emphasis on religious education made a direct contribution to the IRM.

The Seminary program, a high school religious education program introduced in 1912 at Granite High School in Salt Lake City, was the third educational program that was the direct forerunner of the IRM. Joseph F. Merrill, who eventually would become the Commissioner of Church Education in 1928, created the religious education program within the Granite Stake on a released- time format so that Latter-day Saint students could receive theological lessons along with their secular learning. Originally called “Theological Seminary,” eventually the program became known simply as the Seminary program. Within just two years of its establishment it had spread to sixteen state high schools. Superintendent Horace H. Cummings described how the Seminary program was received: “This work seems to meet with great favor, both among the people and the teachers and superintendent of state schools.”<sup>127</sup> Four years later in his report for the year 1919, Superintendent Cummings commented that for the academic year of 1919-1920 the Seminary program would be taught in twenty high schools. His other comment was about

---

<sup>125</sup> Armand L Mauss, *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 96.

<sup>126</sup> Scott C Esplin, "Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888-1933" (Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 2006), 152.

<sup>127</sup> Horace H. Cummings, "Annual Report for 1915," in *Board of Education (General Church), Minutes 1888-1990* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1915), 4.

the cost of the program: “The great amount of good done at the light expense of it appeals to the people, . . .”<sup>128</sup> Within the first decade of its beginning, the Seminary program had reached twenty-three high schools with an enrollment of 3,036 students. By 1927 the number of seminaries had increased to 64, serving 10,835 students.<sup>129</sup> The success of the Seminary program along with its relative low cost made it the program of choice for the LDS Education School System for providing high school students with a religious education program. As the superintendents or commissioners of church schools reported to the General Board of Education about the progress and the virtues of the Seminary program, they began to encourage the Board that a similar program for the college and university students would have the same benefits. With these three programs as precursors, the creation of a college religious education program was to become a reality sometime in the 1920s.

### **Institutional Recognition by the University of Utah for the Need of a Religious Education Program**

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, and on more than one occasion some of the officials at the University of Utah (U of U hereafter), a state university, made requests to the Latter-day Saint Church Education leaders for some type of religious education program for the students of that institution. Because the U of U was located in Salt Lake City, the headquarters for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the majority of the students attending it were members of the LDS Church. In Superintendent

---

<sup>128</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Superintendent's Annual Report for the School Year ending June 30th, 1919," in *Board of Education (General Church)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1919), 10.

<sup>129</sup> Esplin, "Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888-1933," 173.



Cummings' report to the General Board of Education on May 29, 1912, he shared that "the Authorities of the University of Utah were anxious to have some steps taken towards caring for the religious welfare of the Mormon students at that institution."<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, the U of U official expressed some urgency because "At present nothing is being done to look after them spiritually, and as a result some of our best educated boys and girls are losing interest in the gospel and becoming tainted with erroneous ideas and theories."<sup>131</sup> Four months later when Superintendent Cummings delivered his annual report to the same board, he repeated the same theme: "The University of Utah and many state high schools are anxious that proper steps be taken to care for and instruct Latter-day Saint pupils who attend them, and it seems like some adequate arrangement will soon have to be made to provide properly for this work."<sup>132</sup> From his perspective as Superintendent of Church Schools, Cummings felt that actions needed to be taken "soon."

Apparently, the actions that were called for in 1912 were not realized, and the lack of Church revenues was the major reason. It was not until 1915 that Superintendent Cummings again approached the General Board of Education with a similar request for doing something for the Latter-day Saint students at the U of U. In the first part of his annual report for the school year ending on June 30, 1915, Cummings recounted the success of the high school Seminary program and how it had expanded to sixteen high schools. The second half of the report dealt with the issue of "care of University of Utah

---

<sup>130</sup> James R. Clark, "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah" (Dissertation, Utah State University, 1958), 294.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

students.” Cummings chose to frame his request for action with the words “urgent need” with regards to the U of U situation. He told the board, “. . . I wish to call your attention to the urgent need of making some provision to care for the Latter-day Saint students attending the State University.” To substantiate his argument of urgency, he provided the board with this evidence: “The presidency of that school [in 1915 the president was Joseph T. Kingsbury who had attended the University of Deseret] and many of its teachers have urged some kind of building be erected by the Church, near the campus, and that a course of theological training be established for which they would be willing to give college credit.”<sup>133</sup> Cummings interprets the motivation for their request as “they desire the wholesome influence that such an establishment, properly conducted, would exert on the University.”<sup>134</sup> Upon hearing this urgent need and the desired outcome for the U of U, board member Willard Young gave his approval of Superintendent Cummings’ recommendation that “something be done looking towards the establishing of an institution near the State University for the welfare of the Latter-day Saint students.”<sup>135</sup> Financial reasons would prevent the Church Education system from pursuing Superintendent Cummings’ recommendations, as urgent as the need was for such a program.

Four years later on July 16, 1919, Superintendent Cummings presented his annual report for the school year ending on June 30, 1919, to the General Board of Education. The majority of his report was spent on the progress of the high school Seminary

---

<sup>133</sup> Cummings, "Annual Report " 4.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

program. He commented on the adaptations that the Seminary program had to make in light of the flu epidemic that had spread throughout the United States: “The seminaries . . . did considerable work by correspondence and home visits during the long quarantine, and by extra work made up by the end of the year much of what was lost.”<sup>136</sup> Cummings commented on how school officials as well as Church officials were enthusiastic for the maintenance and growth of the program. He mentioned nothing about the progress of the university program. This was the last meeting that Superintendent Cummings attended; this was the end of his administration in the Church School System both as superintendent and as a board member. If the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was going to establish some type of religious education for the U of U or any university, it would have to be directed by someone other than Horace H. Cummings.

### **Latter-day Saint Church Education: Its Educational Program at the Crossroads, 1920-1926.**

Upon the resignation of Superintendent Cummings, the LDS Church leaders made a significant change in the structure of Church Education. From the inception of the Church Schools department in 1888 with Karl G. Maeser as the first Superintendent, the educational administration had been primarily directed by the Superintendent who reported directly to the General Board of Education which was presided over by the First Presidency. The new structure called for a Commissioner of Education for the Church with two Assistant Commissioners. David O. McKay, who had been serving as one of the apostles since 1906, was unanimously chosen to be the first Commissioner; his first

---

<sup>136</sup> Cummings, "Superintendent's Annual Report for 1919," 10.

assistant was Stephen L. Richards, and Richard R. Lyman was chosen as his second assistant. As with the case of McKay, Richards and Lyman were serving in the Quorum of Twelve Apostles when they were selected to be commissioners. They chose as the new Superintendent Adam S. Bennion, a man who had teaching experience at the high school and university level and had been a principal at Granite High School.<sup>137</sup> Bennion assumed his duties as Superintendent on July 1, 1919. For the next eight years, except for an interlude of two years (1921-1923) while he took a leave of absence and earned his doctorate in education, Adam S. Bennion was the guiding force in the Church Education program.

Superintendent Bennion learned his duties quickly by spending a month of training with the outgoing Superintendent Cummings. Within the first year of his superintendency, Bennion presented to the General Board of Education what came to be known as the “policy of 1920.” At the meeting of March 3, 1920, and with the blessing of the three Commissioners, Superintendent Bennion presented a new vision of the Church School system. First, the difficult financial situation of the Church had to be addressed; Bennion noted, “The problem of maintaining the present number of schools is a most difficult one, . . .” To help with the financial constraints, Bennion recommended the elimination of eight academies by either selling the building and grounds to the state or using the properties for other Church purposes. Bennion added as a corollary to this closing of the academies that in their place would be a “Seminary center” that could provide the theological training. Second, he recommended that some of the academies be

---

<sup>137</sup> Kenneth G. Bell, "Adam Samuel Bennion: Superintendent of L.D.S. Education, 1919-1928" (Master of Religious Education, Brigham Young University, 1969), 34-46.

transformed into normal colleges for the training of teachers. He named six institutions to become normal colleges. The reasoning for this decision was to improve the public schools by increasing the number of Latter-day Saint teachers being placed in the state schools. Finally, Bennion wanted to improve the quality of the Seminary program. His assessment of the seminaries was that they were uneven in quality, depending on the “ability and leadership of the principals.” He wanted to fix another issue with the Seminary program with regards to being “too theoretical.” Bennion criticized the seminaries for being “all instruction and no action—no application.” To remedy that situation, it was recommended that Seminary students complete the “theological studies prescribed in the course of study” and at the same time students had to demonstrate “certain attainments in regard to personal habits.” In addition, they had to provide “definite service” in the various Church quorums and auxiliary organizations.<sup>138</sup>

This new policy was discussed at the meeting in which it was presented, but no action was finalized. At the next meeting held on March 15, the proposed policy was adopted as the official Church educational policy. With its adoption, Commissioner McKay justified the Board’s action because it would reach more students. It was the Board’s “aim to increase these [seminaries] as rapidly as possible.”<sup>139</sup> Now Superintendent Bennion had the challenging task of implementing the policy. While the General Board of Education saw the wisdom of closing some of the academies, there were teachers and administrators in those schools who were opposed to the new policy.

---

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 52-54.

<sup>139</sup> David O. McKay, “Minutes of the General Board of Education, March 15, 1920,” in *William E. Berrett Church Educational System History Research Files, 1899-1985* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1920), 13.

The financial savings that could be realized by replacing the academy system with the Seminary system were substantial; it was estimated that the Seminary system “could be provided for about one-eighth the cost of the regular academy.”<sup>140</sup>

From 1920 to 1925 the General Board minutes reflected the progress of implementing this policy. There were often discussions about the effectiveness of the seminaries and how they compared to academies. And when the economy took a downturn, there were discussions that the financial difficulties would cause the Church to be forced to close all church-sponsored schools and terminate all religious educational programs.

As the Church Education program transitioned from academies to the seminaries, Superintendent Bennion attempted to inform the general membership of the Church about the Seminary program, explaining how the Seminary program worked. He published an article in the *Improvement Era*, the official monthly magazine for all Latter-day Saints, outlining the purpose of the seminaries and the curriculum that would be studied by high school students. Bennion wrote optimistically that as an educational program replacing the academies that the seminaries would give “wonderful results.”<sup>141</sup>

A year later in the woman’s monthly magazine, the *Relief Society Magazine*, Bennion echoed the same message, this time directed to women and mothers of the Church. He referred to the days when all Latter-day Saint students attended Church Schools and received “daily instruction in theology.” He asserted that the “Seminary promises to be the institution which will make this instruction more and more generally

---

<sup>140</sup>Bell, "Adam Samuel Bennion: Superintendent of L.D.S. Education, 1919-1928," 30; *ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Adam S. Bennion, "The Latter-day Saints and Education," *Improvement Era*, September 1920, 780.

possible.”<sup>142</sup> He predicted that “If present plans are carried out there will be seminaries operated in many areas of the Church.” He then appealed directly to the mothers of the Church: “Surely every Latter-day Saint parent should urge his [or her] children to enroll as Seminary students.” Bennion concluded the article with a list of benefits that the children would realize by attending Seminary: they would acquire “a religious background for their lives;” they would be trained for missionary service; and they would be inspired with “ideals of life” that would guide them “safely past the temptations of youth” and will make them effective parents to be able to raise the next generation of children.<sup>143</sup>

The process of closing the eight academies was a slow one; as Bennion reported in the December 13, 1921, meeting, only three had been closed by the end of his first year in office. At the same meeting, the Board determined that five more academies would be closed the following year with a savings to the Church of \$75,000.<sup>144</sup> In a Board meeting held a year later on April 15, 1922, President Heber J. Grant and his counselor, Anthony W. Ivins, advised “that it would be wise to proceed very slowly in the establishment of new seminaries until the Church is in better financial condition.”<sup>145</sup>

The economic condition of the Church was a significant factor that weighed heavily upon the mind of President Heber J. Grant. Because of his business and banking background and his personal experience of what was needed to save the Church

---

<sup>142</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, “Preserving the Faith of Our Fathers and Mothers,” *Relief Society Magazine*, September 1921, 506.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Bell, “Adam Samuel Bennion: Superintendent of L.D.S. Education, 1919-1928,” 58.

<sup>145</sup> Heber J. Grant, “Minutes of the General Board of Education, April 15, 1922,” in *William E. Berrett Church Educational System History Research Files, 1899-1985* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1922), 16.

financially in the Panic of 1893,<sup>146</sup> he wanted to avoid overextending the Church's budget by expanding the Church education program. He shared his concern about funding Church education with the membership of the Church in general conference on April 5, 1929. After the Church Board of Education held several discussions on this issue, President Grant was willing to share what the Board had decided. He shared this fact: "It costs ten times as much per capita to give the same amount of religious instruction in our Church schools as is given in our seminaries."<sup>147</sup> If the Church wanted to expand the Seminary program—which it did—then the Church would have to close some of the Church schools. He admitted to the Church members that "figuratively speaking it breaks the heart of the presidency and of each and all of the general authorities of the Church to close any of the Church schools."<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless, "Because of these facts we would like the people to understand that in closing Church schools and opening seminaries we shall be able to give religious instruction to about ten times as many students."<sup>149</sup>

Meanwhile, Commissioner David O. McKay was replaced by John A. Widtsoe on January 26, 1922, as the new Commissioner of Church Education. Widtsoe was probably the most qualified person in the entire Church to serve in this capacity. In 1894 he graduated from Harvard with highest honors. Afterwards, he taught chemistry at the Agricultural College (now Utah State University) in Logan, Utah. In 1898 he left to do graduate studies in chemistry at the University of Göttingen in Germany. He graduated in 1899 magna cum laude with the degrees of Master of Arts and doctor of philosophy. He

---

<sup>146</sup> Ronald W. Walker, "Heber J. Grant and the Panic of 1893," *B.Y.U. Studies* 43, no. 1 (2004): 115-42.

<sup>147</sup> Heber J. Grant, "Funding Church Education," *Conference Report*, April 1929.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*



was one of the first Latter-day Saints to achieve a Ph.D.<sup>150</sup> After obtaining his doctorate, Widtsoe returned to the Agricultural College to be the director of the Experimental Station for five years, 1900-1905. Brigham Young University hired him in 1905 to be the director of the agricultural program; he organized it and built it up into a viable academic program. He held the distinction of being the first faculty member at BYU to hold a Ph.D.<sup>151</sup> In the spring of 1907 he was invited to become the fifth president of the Agricultural College, where he served from 1907-1916. In January 1916 he was invited to become president of the U of U, a university plagued with serious issues concerning the structure and processes of governance. For the next five years, Widtsoe worked collaboratively with the board of trustees and the faculty to negotiate a workable governance model that was accepted by administration and the faculty.

He was nearing the end of his fifth year as president when on March 17, 1921, he received a phone call from Dr. Richard R. Lyman who was serving as an apostle in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Lyman invited Widtsoe to a meeting at his office. When Widtsoe arrived, Lyman took him immediately to the temple where the First Presidency and the Twelve apostles were holding their monthly meeting. President Grant extended an invitation to Widtsoe to serve as an apostle to fill the vacancy left upon the death of Anthon H. Lund.<sup>152</sup> Widtsoe accepted the invitation and was ordained an apostle by President Grant the same day. His vast experience as an educator and university president was soon to be manifested as a strong voice in his leadership role in

---

<sup>150</sup> Alan K. Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 117.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

Church education in the 1920s and later when he served as Commissioner of Education for a second term.

At the first meeting that Commissioner Widtsoe attended of the Board of Education, held on April 4, 1923, one of the main topics discussed was the continued expansion of the Seminary program. The Board discussed the “establishment of seminaries for East High and West High schools . . .” in Salt Lake City. At the same meeting, the concept of extending the same type of program to the university was given brief mention: “and some plan for taking care of the Latter-day Saint student of the University.”<sup>153</sup> Widtsoe presented the board with the facts and figures they needed to determine the best course of action within the budget of the Church. He reported that there were “2500 high school students of our faith in this city and 1200 Latter-day Saint students at the University [referring to the Latter-day Saint University begun by the Church in 1893 in Salt Lake City] who are not residents of the city.” He summarized the challenge facing the board: “The problem is to take care of all these students . . .” Next, he presented his estimate of the cost of providing seminaries for all the high school students in Salt Lake City: “the cost would easily reach a quarter of a million dollars.” Because of the prohibitive cost, Widtsoe suggested that the Board could follow either one of these two courses: they could increase the L.D.S. University plant to take care of the high school students, or they could establish seminaries “at a much lower cost . . .”<sup>154</sup> At the conclusion of the board meeting, Anthony W. Ivins—counselor in the First

---

<sup>153</sup> John A. Widtsoe, “Minutes of the General Board of Education, April 4, 1923,” in *William E. Berrett Church Educational System History Research Files, 1899-1985*. (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1923), 19.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

Presidency—expressed his opinion that because “the critical period in life of the child, so far as laying a foundation of faith is concerned, was during the high school period” that if a choice had to be made between the Church sponsoring high school seminaries or sponsoring religious education at the college level, he would prefer to provide the funds for the high school students.<sup>155</sup> For the time being, the Church was going to continue to expand the Seminary program for high school students; the collegiate Seminary program would have to wait.

For a four year period John A. Widtsoe served as the Commissioner of Education in the Church. It was during part of this period that Adam S. Bennion took a leave of absence as Superintendent of education to complete his doctorate. In 1925 Bennion was reinstated as Superintendent and Widtsoe and his Assistant Commissioners were released from their positions. This action took place on April 1, 1925.<sup>156</sup> At the next month’s General Board of Education meeting, Superintendent Bennion announced this proposal (as recorded in the minutes): “The proposition of erecting a building adjacent to the Idaho University at Moscow for a Seminary and social center was brought up by the Superintendent and considered by the Board.”<sup>157</sup> This is the first mention in the Board minutes of anything about the U of I, Moscow, and its receiving a “Seminary.” What had happened that suddenly there was an interest in putting a Seminary adjacent to the U of I in the northern Idaho city of Moscow?

### **The Influence of the Geddes Family on the Creation of the First Institute**

---

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography*: 357.

<sup>157</sup> Adam S. Bennion, "Minutes of the General Board of Education, May 6th, 1925," in *William E. Berrett Church Educational System History Research Files, 1899-1985* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1925), 24.

In order to understand the apparent “sudden” interest of the Latter-day Saints in putting a collegiate Seminary in Moscow in 1925, it is imperative to trace the actions of the William C. Geddes family of Winchester, Idaho. William C. Geddes<sup>158</sup> was born at Plain City, Utah, on December 16, 1879, a third generation Latter-day Saint in Utah. His father, William S. Geddes, took his family in 1890 to the Hood River district of Oregon to work as a timber man for the Oregon Lumber Company. When the father passed away a year later, his widow and six children returned to Plain City, Utah. While living in Plain City, William C. Geddes learned at an early age how to work to help support his family. According to his granddaughter, Barbara Greene Mosman of Moscow, Idaho, Geddes was “forced [because of the economic situation] to go to work in the woods at the age of 12.”<sup>159</sup> Despite his demanding work routine, he was able to attend grammar school and high school in Plain City. At age eighteen he was in a train wreck. With the money he received from the settlement, he attended Oneida Academy in Preston, Idaho, for a while, securing for himself a good education.<sup>160</sup> After attending the academy, Geddes served a two-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Upon his return from the mission, Geddes began to work for the Oregon Lumber Company in the logging camps. Later, he was taken from his logging duties to work in the office, performing clerical duties. While in the office, he learned the routine of the saw mills.

---

<sup>158</sup> In William E. Berrett’s book, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System* (Salt Lake City, UT: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988) William C. Geddes is referred to as “W. G. Geddes” (p. 6). The correct name is William C. Geddes.

<sup>159</sup> Vera White, "Institute Nutured Family's Faith through Generations," *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, October 28, 1997, 3.

<sup>160</sup> The sources give varying interpretations about how long Geddes attended the Oneida Academy. Defenbach claims that he attended the academy for three years. White asserts that he attended the academy for only one year and then he served a mission in California. I am accepting White's interpretation on this point.

Eventually his employment history was summarized by a biographer: Geddes went from a “teamster to general superintendent of the company.”<sup>161</sup> From 1904 until 1921 he held various corporate positions in three lumber companies. Finally, in 1921 he was made general manager of the Oregon Lumber Company with its business headquarters in Winchester, Idaho. Geddes moved his family to Winchester, Idaho, in 1923. Along with his successful business activities he was active in the Lewiston Lodge of Elks and participated in Masonic work both York and Scottish Rites. Simultaneously he was an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>162</sup> His second oldest daughter, Norma, described her father as “a self-made, extremely successful businessman . . .”<sup>163</sup> As part of his success, he became involved in civic organizations and showed interest in educational issues. Two Idaho governors appointed him as a member of the State Board of Education and Board of Regents for the University. His first tenure as a regent was from 1930-1933.<sup>164</sup>

On June 14, 1905, William C. Geddes married Mamie Thompson. The couple eventually had five children: Zola, Norma, Serge (who died at age five), Barbara, and Ruth Tracie. The Geddes children felt somewhat isolated living in Winchester because they missed the association of other Latter-day Saints with whom they had enjoyed fellowship while living in previous communities in Utah and Oregon. The two oldest girls, Zola and Norma, while growing up in Winchester looked forward to attending

---

<sup>161</sup> Byron Defenbach, *Idaho: The Place and Its People, A History of the Gem State from Prehistoric to Present Days*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1933), 246.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>163</sup> W. Homer Peterson, ed. *The Mormons on the Palouse: History and Recollections* (Pullman, Washington: Pullman Washington Stake, 1987), 39.

<sup>164</sup> M. G. Neale, "Letter from President M. G. Neale to W. C. Geddes," in *President's Office, Records, 1893-1965* (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho, Special Collections and Archives, 1933), 1.

college in Oregon where they had enjoyed the association with a larger membership of Latter-day Saints. When it was time for the girls to attend college, their father informed them, “Either go to the University of Idaho or sit in Winchester and twiddle your thumbs.”<sup>165</sup> The Geddes sisters were disappointed, but they knew their father was serious, so they packed their bags for Moscow. Both Zola Geddes (age twenty) and her younger sister, Norma (age eighteen) enrolled as freshmen in the U of I, Moscow, in the fall of 1925. They had lived in Winchester for about two years. Norma Geddes described Winchester as “strictly a mill town, and there was no Mormon church for us to attend.” They accepted their fate that if they wanted to attend college they had to attend the U of I. Norma and Zola looked forward to associating with a large group of Latter-day Saint students in Moscow, but “Our expectations of finding a large group of active LDS students in Moscow was not fulfilled.”<sup>166</sup> Instead, the girls encountered an “extremely small branch of the Church in Moscow” that did not have its own building.

Elder John A. Widtsoe of the Council of the Twelve with President Heber C. Iverson of the Northwestern States Mission had organized the Moscow Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1921. Prior to the branch’s organization, the Latter-day Saint students and faculty members had been organized into a Sunday School in 1920 by the Northwestern States Mission. For that school year they met in what was called the “Y-Hut,” a YMCA facility built on the university campus intended for student activities.<sup>167</sup> The first converts to the Latter-day Saint Church were

---

<sup>165</sup> Dennis A. Wright, "The Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion at Moscow, Idaho," *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 65.

<sup>166</sup> Peterson, *Mormons on the Palouse*, 38.

<sup>167</sup> Wright, "Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 68.

members of the Andrew Erickson family who were baptized in 1900. The family lived just outside the city of Moscow. As more Latter-day Saint students and faculty came to the U of I, by 1908 there were approximately a dozen members of the Church associated with the University. As of that date there was no formal Mormon Church organization so they attended Protestant services on Sundays. Eventually they organized their own group and called themselves the “MIA [Mutual Improvement Association] of the University of Idaho.”<sup>168</sup> The Latter-day Saint students met at the home of a married student, J. R. Maughan.

When the Geddes sisters arrived in Moscow in the fall of 1925, the Latter-day Saints held their Sunday meetings in a rented building, on the second floor of the International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) lodge, located at 525 South Main in downtown Moscow. Norma Geddes recalls what the hall was like: “A dingy, unswept flight of stairs led upstairs to this hall. If a social event had been held by the lodge members the night before, the odor of stale cigarette smoke would still permeate the air on the Sabbath.” Besides the smell of cigarettes, there was also the issue of whiskey bottles: “Those were the days of Prohibition and often the ‘bootleg’ whiskey bottles were left in the corners.”<sup>169</sup> In addition to the poor physical conditions of the building, there were other challenges the students who lived on campus had to face. “It was not exactly popular to be a Mormon, and some fraternal living groups discouraged pledging them.”<sup>170</sup> The Latter-day Saint students were viewed as “outsiders” both in Moscow and at the

---

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>169</sup> Peterson, *Mormons on the Palouse*, 39.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

university. “Add to this the difficulty of arising Sunday morning to a cold breakfast and, in the winter, facing snow and ice to walk from the campus downtown to an often drafty hall to attend church.”<sup>171</sup> At that time, the U of I Dean of Students, Permeal French, did not allow students to have cars on campus, so if they wanted to get downtown they had to walk. Norma concluded that “it took a hardy soul and a strong desire to attend church.” Of her close associates, the only ones she knew who attended the Mormon Branch were herself, her sister and a friend.<sup>172</sup>

One weekend in the fall of 1925, Mr. William C. Geddes was in Moscow on business. He stayed over on Sunday to visit with his daughters and to attend church with them. That Sunday Norma and Zola joined their father downtown at the Moscow Hotel for breakfast and together they walked across the street to attend church. Norma recalls, “I don’t think the lodge hall ever looked more drab, nor seemed more chilly than it did that morning.” She describes how her father reacted to conditions he experienced that Sunday: “My father was absolutely appalled that the church allowed such unfavorable conditions in a college community.”<sup>173</sup>

Geddes was a man of action; he was going to do something about the appalling conditions he found that Sunday in Moscow. Geddes was a lifetime friend of Preston Nibley, who in 1925 was on the General Board of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, the leadership council that directed the activities of the young people of the LDS Church. Geddes called Preston Nibley to see what could be done about the situation

---

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.



in Moscow; Preston Nibley suggested that he would talk with his father, Charles W. Nibley, an important leader in the Church. Previous to 1925, Charles W. Nibley had served as Presiding Bishop of the Church, a very significant leadership position because he was directing the programs and activities for all the young men ages twelve to eighteen. On May 28, 1925, Charles W. Nibley was selected by President Heber J. Grant to be his second counselor in the First Presidency. This elevated him to the highest level of leadership in the Church. Charles W. Nibley invited Geddes to Salt Lake City to discuss the matter. Geddes explained what the conditions were like for his daughters and the other Church members who were attending the U of I. Norma recalls that her father “had convinced them [Charles W. Nibley and the other two members of the First Presidency] that the University of Idaho could never hope to attract LDS students from south Idaho unless the parents knew that their sons and daughters would be provided a better spiritual environment.”<sup>174</sup> Geddes received assurances from the First Presidency that “action would be taken, “committing to providing some type of suitable facility for the LDS students at the university. To William C. Geddes belongs some of the credit for the founding of the first Institute of Religion. Undoubtedly he planted the seeds with the First Presidency that there was a strong need to do something to care for the Latter-day Saint students at the U of I. Norma Geddes, from the perspective of the Geddes family, was later to write: “The very proudest achievement in his life [William C. Geddes] was

---

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 40.

instigating the earliest action in obtaining the very first LDS Institute on any college campus here at the University of Idaho.”<sup>175</sup>

### **The Influence of Latter-day Saint Professors on the Faculty of the University of Idaho**

Prior to the actions taken by Mr. William C. Geddes in 1926 with the First Presidency, two Latter-day Saint professors at the U of I, George L. Luke, professor of physics and later department chair, and William J. Wilde,<sup>176</sup> professor of agriculture, also recognized that something needed to be done for the growing number of Mormon students then attending the university.<sup>177</sup> In 1924 these professors proposed to the university the possibility of allowing the Latter-day Saints to establish a student center adjacent to the campus. The university officials responded positively to the request and extended an invitation to the Church to proceed with their plans for such a student center. The U of I officials realized that if they wanted to attract more Latter-day Saint students from southern Idaho to come north to Moscow to attend the university a Latter-day Saint student center would be a strong drawing card. Professor Luke, at the request of the university, traveled to Salt Lake City to meet with the Latter-day Saint Church leaders “to convince them to construct a building that would blend with the architecture of the

---

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>176</sup> Both William E. Berrett in his book, and Dennis Wright in his article refer to a William J. Wilde as a faculty member. In correspondence with Julie Monroe, a researcher in Special Collections at the Main Library at the University of Idaho, she found no record of a William J. Wilde, but she did find a Willard Joseph Wilde, a professor of accounting. This William J. Wilde may possibly be William Joseph Wilde. Email correspondence was received by the author on May 12, 2011.

<sup>177</sup> Wright, "Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 70.

University.”<sup>178</sup> Wilde and Luke, as faculty members, further realized that any student center offering religious instruction would have greater attraction for students if the university would grant credit for such classes.

Seeking help from other professors who were sympathetic to their cause, in 1925 the U of I officials sent a formal proposal to the State Board of Education and Board of Regents. At their meeting on May 30, 1925, members of that university governing body approved a document outlining the “conditions” and “standards” that must exist before the university could grant credit for religious education classes offered by the Latter-day Saints or any other religious group.<sup>179</sup> The Board specified these six “conditions”: 1. the courses would have to be offered by an “incorporated organization” that would assume the responsibility for the selection of its instructors and provide a physical plant suitable for university instruction. 2. The courses offered would have to conform to the constitutional provision guiding the University of Idaho: “No instruction either sectarian in religion or partisan in politics shall ever be allowed in any department of the University.”<sup>180</sup> 3. The university elective credit could not exceed eight semester hours. 4. Only students of sophomore standing or above would be allowed to receive credit for the courses. 5. Students seeking credit for such courses would have to obtain permission

---

<sup>178</sup> "Memory Book for the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the Moscow Institute of Religion: A Brief History of the Moscow Institute of Religion," (Moscow, ID: n. p., 2001), 18.

<sup>179</sup> State Board of Education and Board of Regents of the University of Idaho, "Minutes of the Meeting of the State Board of Education and Board of Regents of the University of Idaho," in *President's Office, Records, 1893-1965* (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho, Special Collections and Archives, 1925), 95-96. These "Conditions and Standards for Accrediting Nonsectarian Courses Offered by Religious Foundations" are cited by Wright, "Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion," p. 71 and by Berrett, "Miracle in Weekday Religious Education," pp. 49-50; Arrington summarizes the six "conditions" and seven "standards" in "Founding of the L.D.S. Institutes of Religion," p. 142. J. Wyley Sessions lists all the conditions and standards in an article "The Latter-day Saint Institutes," *Improvement Era* 38, no. 7 (July 1935): 412.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

from the dean of their college and ensure that their total number of credits including their religious education credits did not exceed university standards. 6. Credit for these courses would be granted only upon the “recommendation of the Committee on Advanced Standing.”<sup>181</sup>

Along with the six conditions, the Board specified seven “standards” that had to be followed: 1.) the instructor needed to have a master’s degree or its equivalent and possess “such maturity of scholarship as is required for appointment to the position of full professor in the University of Idaho.”<sup>182</sup> 2. The courses would have to conform to the university’s standard “in library requirements and in method and rigor of their conduct.”<sup>183</sup> 3. Only students officially enrolled in the university would be eligible to take the courses. 4. The religion classes would have to conform to the University calendar and length of the class period. 5. Approval of the courses would not be granted until they “are adequately financed and there is likelihood of their permanency.”<sup>184</sup> 6. Approval for the courses would be granted only to Foundations that maintained at least one instructor who could devote at least half time to the religious education program. 7. Finally, the university reserved the right to “assure itself from time to time that these conditions and standards are being met.”<sup>185</sup>

### **The Influence of the Local Latter-day Saint Church Leaders in Moscow, Idaho**

A third prong of activity regarding the establishment of a religious education center at the U of I came from the local members of the Church in Moscow. William E.

---

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

Berrett, an administrator in the Church Education System, asserts that in 1926 “the Church was receiving letters from members in Moscow, Idaho, requesting help in building a Church student center near the University of Idaho.”<sup>186</sup> The local LDS Church leader was Elmo J. Call, a local chiropractor; at that time Dr. Call was serving as the Branch President of the small Latter-day Saint congregation, the Moscow Branch. His two counselors, George L. Luke and William J. Wilde, the two professors who were encouraging the university to be receptive to such a religious center, were also encouraging the Branch President to use his influence with Church leaders in Salt Lake City to proceed with the student center. The Moscow Branch Presidency was united in appealing to the First Presidency to listen to their request. They wrote letters to the First Presidency asking for a student center in order to take care of the university students.

### **The Influence of American Higher Education on the Lives and Thoughts of the Men Who Became the Leaders in the LDS Religious Education Movements**

In explaining the important influences that eventually resulted in the founding of the IRM, the influence of American higher education on the lives and thoughts of the men who eventually became the leaders of LDS education needs some attention. First, I will consider the experiences in higher education of Adam S. Bennion, the Superintendent of Church Education from 1919 to 1928; it was during his administration that the first Institute was established.

---

<sup>186</sup> William E. Berrett, in collaboration with Frank W. Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988), 48-49.

Adam S. Bennion was born in Taylorsville, Utah, on December 2, 1886. After completing his public schooling in Salt Lake County schools, he then attended the University of Utah where he graduated in English with honors in 1908. While attending the U of U he was active with his church activities in Taylorsville. He taught at the Latter-day Saint High School in Salt Lake for the next three years. Before leaving for New York to seek an advanced degree, he married and then pursued his master's degree in literature from Columbia University, completing it in one year. He returned to Salt Lake to teach one year at Granite High School and then he became its principal. After five years at Granite High School, in the fall of 1917 he was invited to join the faculty at the U of U. He taught several English courses there and became a favorite of the students. In the summer of 1919 President Heber J. Grant of the LDS Church invited Bennion at age thirty-three to become the superintendent of the Church Schools.<sup>187</sup> He was to serve under the new Commissioner of Education, David O. McKay, and his two assistant commissioners, Stephen L. Richards and Richard R. Lyman.

The sources that deal with his educational experiences at Columbia and later at the University of California, Berkeley, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1923, do not reveal anything significant that influenced his thinking in establishing the IRM. It was while he was an undergraduate at the U of U that he came under the influence of two men that he felt had assisted him greatly. These men were James E. Talmage, originally a professor of geology and later president of the university, and Milton Bennion, a professor of philosophy. From his personal experiences interacting with these two men who served as

---

<sup>187</sup> Bell, "Adam Samuel Bennion: Superintendent of L.D.S. Education, 1919-1928," 45-46.

his mentors, he developed the idea that he shared in the Church Board of Education meeting on March 23, 1926, that “each university be supplemented with religious education under the able leadership of strong men. He felt that one of the main duties of these able leaders would be to draw students to them for personal consultation and counsel.”<sup>188</sup> Superintendent Bennion, because of the influence of his undergraduate mentors at the U of U attempted to hire “strong men” as religious educators so that they could act as counselors to the students.

Dr. Joseph F. Merrill followed Dr. Bennion as the next Superintendent of LDS education in 1928. Like Bennion, Merrill was born in Utah, in the small northern town of Richmond, on August 24, 1868. After receiving his elementary education in public schools, he enrolled in the University of Deseret (later to become the U of U) in Salt Lake City in 1887. Within two years he obtained his teaching certificate; however he decided to continue his education and over the course of the next eight years he attended the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, Cornell University, and Johns Hopkins University. During these years in the east, Merrill had a variety of church experiences that would later influence his ideas about the importance of religious education and how it could help LDS college students. At the University of Michigan there were enough LDS members at the university to have an organized branch. Merrill served as the branch president and made many important acquaintances, including Richard R. Lyman. Merrill and Lyman became colleagues at the U of U and later served together in the Quorum of the Twelve.

---

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 93.

It was while he was attending Johns Hopkins in Baltimore that he felt completely isolated as a Latter-day Saint. Because there was no organized branch of the Church in that area, Merrill attempted to satisfy his spiritual needs by visiting other churches. He recorded his feelings at that time and the contrast he felt between what he saw in the churches he visited and what he was accustomed to in the LDS services:

I usually attended one non-Mormon church service, sometimes two services, every Sunday. For a considerable number of years I was out of intimate contact with my own Church so I went to all the churches in the communities where I lived . . . and attended their services at least 350 times during that time. I listened to many eloquent sermons, but never once did I hear the preacher use the word 'know' with the meaning we give it in our testimony bearing.<sup>189</sup>

His feeling of isolation and not having any contact with other church members had a lasting effect on Joseph F. Merrill. I am theorizing that these experiences helped shape his vision of what the Institute of Religion should provide for Latter-day Saint college students. At one level, the social level, Merrill would want the institute to provide a “welcoming” environment so that college students away from home could feel some fellowship with other members of the church.

Merrill studied chemistry and physics while in the east and was exposed to many scientific theories during his graduate studies. So, on another level, the intellectual level, Merrill would want the institute to provide intellectual guidance to Latter-day Saint students. Merrill, as a scientist and as a Latter-day Saint, was a firm believer in what he

---

<sup>189</sup> Casey Paul Griffiths, "Joseph F. Merrill Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education, 1928-1933" (Master of Arts, Brigham Young University, 2007), 26.



called the “harmony of all truth.”<sup>190</sup> He reasoned that when students go to college they were sometimes faced with new problems which could be disturbing to their religious faith. As they studied, read and were taught, some of the ideas seemed to be in conflict with religious views. Merrill believed that the institute program could provide answers and guidance to college students so that they could harmonize science and religion. From Merrill’s perspective, “it is impossible that truths discovered in the realms of science and philosophy shall be in conflict with truths of religion.”<sup>191</sup> However, reasoned Merrill, our understanding of what is truth may be faulty, and this was where the institute could play a vital role in harmonizing and reconciling science and religion. Merrill believed that “Religious faith need not retreat from nor surrender in any of the fields of research or learning. Scholarship can never put God out of existence nor find a substitute for Him. This is the abiding confidence of the Latter-day Saints.”<sup>192</sup> I assert that in the case of Dr. Adam S. Bennion and the case of Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, both Superintendents of LDS Education, their educational experiences were instrumental in shaping their vision of the institute program.

### **Perspective on the Relations between the State of Idaho and the LDS Church**

The fact that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was reaching out to the university and vice versa was a significant step in a type of reconciliation process that was long overdue. For decades the relationship between the State of Idaho and the Latter-day Saint Church had been quite strained. Brigham Young had encouraged Church

---

<sup>190</sup> Joseph F Merrill, "Department of Education: L.D.S. Institutes and Why," *Improvement Era*, December 1929, 136.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

members to settle areas north of Cache Valley and Malad Valley. This resulted in the founding of Franklin in 1860, the “first permanent non-Indian settlement in what is now Idaho . . .”<sup>193</sup> From the very beginning, Idaho Territory had some serious divisions and disagreements. Historian Leonard Arrington asserts that the divisions can be summed up as two major issues, both of which were based on sectionalism: “One was a demand for annexation of north Idaho to Washington; the other was agitation against the Mormons of southeastern Idaho.”<sup>194</sup> The majority of voters in Idaho Territory were Democrats. After the Republican Party in 1860 had declared itself opposed to the “twin evils of barbarism”—slavery and polygamy—that assured that the Mormons in Idaho would vote for the Democratic candidates. The Republican Party leaders in Idaho, sensing that it was useless to seek the Mormon vote, began “a crusade against the Mormons and their influence in Idaho territorial politics.”<sup>195</sup> While polygamy was the most obvious and visible issue that divided Mormons from their detractors, historian Merle W. Wells argues that the other issues were “religious differences, social separatism, economic hostility against the Saints’ cooperatives, and political objections to Mormon theocracy . . .”<sup>196</sup> When anti-Mormons gained control of both houses of the Idaho legislature, they passed on December 22, 1884, an act forbidding Mormons from voting and from holding county office, and created a new anti-Mormon county. The end result was, in the words of Arrington, “For the next eight years, members of Idaho’s largest religious

---

<sup>193</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *History of Idaho*, 2 vols. (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1994), Vol. 1, 180.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>196</sup> Merle W. Wells, "Origins of Anti-Mormonism in Idaho, 1872-1880," *Idaho Yesterday: The Journal of the Idaho State Historical Society* 44, no. 4 (2001): 54.

denomination were unable to vote, hold office, or even serve on a jury.”<sup>197</sup> It is no wonder that many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had reservations and a lack of trust in their dealings with the State of Idaho.

How this strained relationship was perceived by the person who eventually was chosen to be the director of the Institute of Religion at the U of I, J. Wyley Sessions, is quite revealing. It shows how the typical southern Idaho Mormon perceived the situation. In commenting about being assigned to go to Moscow to explore the possibilities of what the Church could do there to take care of the university students, Sessions expressed his perception of the situation:

Moscow in north Idaho had always, from the beginning, been very prejudiced toward the Mormon people. The state of Idaho was settled by two different cultures: North Idaho, whose whole interest was gold, money, mining, and timber and building up the great northwest, and south Idaho, settled by Mormon immigrants from all over the world. The North Idaho interest was in Seattle, Washington, Spokane, and Portland, Oregon and those cities of the Northwest. The Mormon people knew very little of north Idaho and cared less. Their interest centered in Salt Lake City and all of their efforts were to build up the country and to establish Zion and to raise their families among the saints. And so were the two. The prejudice had lasted all through the years. The University of Idaho always had its difficulties in getting appropriation for the University at Moscow. It was badly located from the standpoint of its utility to the people who serve the state.<sup>198</sup>

When Sessions was chosen by the First Presidency, he entered his assignment with the mindset that the northern town of Moscow had been “very prejudiced” toward the Mormon people. With this perspective, he felt that he had a large challenge to overcome

---

<sup>197</sup> Arrington, *History of Idaho*: 372.

<sup>198</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 4-5.

that prejudice and to build a trusting relationship between the Church, the university, and the town of Moscow.

### **The Selection of J. Wyley Sessions and Magdalen Sessions to be the Founders of the First Institute of Religion**

J. Wyley Sessions and his wife, Magdalen Sessions, played an extremely important role in the founding of the first Institute of Religion. In 1926 circumstances put J. Wyley Sessions and his family in Salt Lake City, Utah. They arrived in that city on September 25, 1926, after spending seven years and three months in missionary work for the Church as Mission President of the South African Mission with headquarters in Cape Town. In Salt Lake City the Sessions family stayed with Magdalen's parents, Marcus and Forthilda Funk. As customary in the processing of returning mission presidents, the First Presidency holds an in-depth interview with the released president. It is a type of exit interview to determine the progress of the mission, to ascertain what suggestions the president may have for the improvement of the missionary work in that area, and to discuss the future plans of the mission president. President Heber J. Grant and his counselor, Charles W. Nibley (the same Nibley who had met previously with William C. Geddes with regards to the situation of the Moscow Branch), conducted the interview on October 12, 1926.

As the members of the Sessions family were leaving the mission field, J. Wyley had received word that he was going to be hired by the Church to work with the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company and return to live in Idaho, the state of his birth. At least J. Wyley recorded, "It was understood, generally assumed that I would be given a job with the

Utah-Idaho Sugar Company.”<sup>199</sup> In the *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, the European publication of the Church which carried the news of the Church and its missionary efforts that were directed by the European Mission President, the announcement was made that the Sessions family was leaving the mission field. In the article entitled “Homeward Bound” President James E. Talmage announced that all the members of “the family now return to their home in Pocatello, Idaho, . . .”<sup>200</sup> J. Wyley had worked in agricultural work in Idaho as a county agricultural agent before the mission. He records that “he was very anxious to go to work and to have a job with the Utah-Idaho Company.” In J. Wyley’s 1965 oral history interview, he emphasized the fact that he and Magdalen “had promised ourselves that we would not go back into educational work.”<sup>201</sup> While in South Africa they did not get a salary nor did they receive any stipend, so the last paycheck they had received was in November 1918. J. Wyley confessed, “We knew we were broke. We had less than we had when we were married years before, several years before, ten [years] or . . .”<sup>202</sup> He felt that returning to educational work would be a return to economic struggles, and he and Magdalen wanted to avoid that. A job in a growing company was very desirable to them. Sessions admitted that he was “thrilled” at the prospects of working for the Utah-Idaho Company. He viewed the potential of the sugar business job as being more rewarding financially.

As Charles W. Nibley was concluding the interview in which he was explaining the position that Sessions would have in the sugar company, Nibley stopped midsentence

---

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> James E. Talmage, “Homeward Bound,” *Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*, August 19, 1926, 525.

<sup>201</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, “J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview,” (Provo, Utah 1965), 8.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

and looked over at President Grant and said, “Heber, we’re making a mistake.” President Grant concurred. “I’m afraid we are. I haven’t felt just right about assigning Brother Sessions to the Sugar Company.” Grant went on to say what might happen with Sessions, saying, “There’s something else for this man.” After a long pause, Nibley finally shared with Sessions, “Brother Sessions, you’re the man for us to send to the University of Idaho to take care of our boys and girls who are attending the university there, and to study the situation and tell us what the Church should do for Latter-day Saint students attending state universities.”<sup>203</sup>

In his 1965 oral interview, J. Wyley quoted Charles W. Nibley’s reasons why he felt that Sessions was the right man for the U of I assignment: “Why, he’s worked for the U of I, he knows the president and he knows the students, and he knows Idaho.”<sup>204</sup> From Nibley’s perspective, J. Wyley Sessions was the right person for what the Church needed in Moscow because of his connections with his home state of Idaho and the relationships he had previously made with the U of I.

Researcher Casey Paul Griffiths explored in his 2010 article about J. Wyley Sessions two other reasons for the First Presidency to select him to go to Moscow. First, as mission president in South Africa, he “had demonstrated his ability for opening doors and making friends for the Church.”<sup>205</sup> Sessions would need to use this ability that he had learned and developed in South Africa in order to get the university and community support for a Latter-day Saint religious education program in Moscow. Second, with the

---

<sup>203</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, “J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History,” 4.

<sup>204</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, “J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview,” 9.

<sup>205</sup> Casey Paul Griffiths, “The First Institute Teacher,” *Religious Educator* 11, no. 2 (2010): 182.

sacrifices that he had made for the Church in serving as a mission president, Sessions had proven his commitment and loyalty to the leadership of the Church. Charles W. Nibley and President Grant knew that they could trust J. Wyley Sessions in representing the Church in working with the U of I. He had proven himself worthy of their trust; an important quality that they felt was essential in this important assignment.

In an attempt to be objective about Sessions' selection, while he certainly possessed some unique characteristics or had some unique experiences that qualified him as the right person to be sent to Moscow, there were some trade-offs that could be mentioned. First, his academic training was in agriculture or agronomy; he did not have academic training in teaching religion. When he was called as mission president, he recognized his lack of training as a possible weakness: "To go out there [to South Africa] without training in the field of religion, I could do something about farm fertilizer, but I didn't know anything about the Bible and religious training."<sup>206</sup>

A possible second trade-off was the fact that he was going to be working in a university environment and yet he had not acquired any advanced degree. He had graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture and was planning on attending Cornell University to obtain a master's degree when called to be mission president, but he had not had the opportunity to complete any advanced degree. He eventually obtained his master's at the U of I and completed three summers at the University of Chicago, but he never completed his goal of a doctorate.

---

<sup>206</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview," 10.

A final trade-off was that J. Wyley Sessions had not had any experience in teaching religious education classes. By 1926, the Church had a cadre of experienced religious educators who had taught in the high school Seminary program or who had taught religion at Brigham Young University, but none of them was selected by the First Presidency. They preferred to choose someone without that experience. Even with these apparent deficiencies, J. Wyley Sessions was chosen by the First Presidency for the Moscow assignment. To them, Sessions' previous connections with the U of I and the strong trust they had in him outweighed any negatives. They were convinced that he was the right person for the assignment.

Upon being told that the Church wanted to send Sessions to the U of I, he reacted immediately with these words: "Oh, no brethren, are you calling me on another mission?" He had just completed seven years and three months serving as a missionary, five of those as a mission president. The position of a Latter-day Saint mission president is very demanding because he must supervise and be responsible, in most missions, for more than one hundred missionaries, between the ages of nineteen and twenty-four, who are volunteers with little training. Hence, Sessions' reaction of concern when it sounded like, to him, that he was being called on another mission. To soothe Sessions' feelings, President Grant told him, "No, Brother Sessions, we're not calling you on another mission. How long have you been on a mission now?" When he answered that he had served for seven years and three months, and that he had just arrived from the missionary service twenty-one days ago. President Grant replied, "We're giving you a fine



opportunity to render a splendid service to the Church and for yourself a real professional opportunity.”<sup>207</sup>

As Sessions got up to leave the interview, Nibley arose from his seat and took Sessions by the arm and said, “Brother Sessions, don’t be disappointed. This is what the Lord wants you to do. Now you go and the Lord bless you. Come back and see us at 3:00 this afternoon.” He went home to share his disappointment with his wife. He described his true feelings that he was “very disappointed.” He confessed that “I didn’t want to do it.”<sup>208</sup> Nevertheless, he returned to President Grant’s office that afternoon and received the official calling and instructions to go to Moscow, Idaho, as soon as possible. He repeated the earlier charge that Sessions was to “study the situation and tell us what the Church should do for Latter-day Saint students attending state universities.” Although initially “very disappointed,” J. Wyley Sessions gathered his family and belongings and headed to Moscow. They arrived on October 16, 1926, to fulfill the charge that he had received.

An important matter that emerged from the interview that Sessions had with the First Presidency was the overarching reason why the Church leaders were so concerned about sending someone to the U of I. Sessions interpreted what Charles W. Nibley expressed to him. As soon as Nibley concluded the interview, J. Wyley thought, “They were losing too many of the students at the University of Idaho, and there’s a big long situation here.”<sup>209</sup> His next thought was, “After the war, and all the universities over the

---

<sup>207</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 4.

<sup>208</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview," 9.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

country were trying to find some way to get morals and religion back into the universities, hence these religious foundations that were growing up around all the various universities.”<sup>210</sup> In the 1965 oral interview, after J. Wyley expressed his thoughts about why they were being sent to Moscow, Magdalen expressed her opinion that they were being sent there because in Moscow “. . . there was no Mormon influence there whatever.”<sup>211</sup> J. Wyley then repeats, “And they [at the U of I. in Moscow] were losing them and I think there had been some thinking what to do of course, but no concrete thing, . . .”<sup>212</sup> The use of the term “losing them” implies that the students were not maintaining their activity in the Church. And as Magdalen observed, “there was no Mormon influence there whatever,” it would have been difficult for Latter-day Saints to keep their connection with the Church. The Church leaders were looking for someone to study the situation at Moscow to determine what the Church could do to prevent “losing” them and to find ways to do the opposite, to “keep” them in the Church and to have them maintain their religious faith. I think it is a reasonable interpretation that the Church was interested in maintaining the orthodoxy of these university students. That was the challenge that the First Presidency was issuing to J. Wyley and Magdalen.

### **J. Wyley Sessions and Magdalen Sessions, Background and Experience Prior to 1926**

J. Wyley Sessions was born in 1885 in Marion, Idaho, a small community in southern Idaho, approximately five hundred miles from Moscow. He and his wife

---

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

attended the Utah Agricultural College in Logan, Utah. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in agriculture on May 23, 1911.<sup>213</sup> Two years later he married Magdalen Funk in the Salt Lake City Temple. He taught agriculture in high school for one year in Manti, Utah, and then returned to his native Idaho to teach the same subject matter at the Idaho Technical Institute in Pocatello (later to become the U of I, Southern Branch) and later he became an agricultural agent.

On June 6, 1919, President Heber J. Grant, acting on behalf of the First Presidency of the Church, called J. Wyley Sessions to be the mission president of the South African Mission.<sup>214</sup> Because of some delays with visas, the Sessions could not begin their missionary service in South Africa in 1919. After several months of negotiations, the Sessions eventually arrived in South Africa in 1921. For the next five years J. Wyley Sessions, assisted by his wife, Magdalen, served as the mission president in South Africa. During their tenure they witnessed growth and progress of the Church in their area.

The Sessions remained in South Africa until June 1, 1926. When they were released as missionaries, James E. Talmage was serving as the President of the European Mission and he highlighted one of the main features of the Sessions' mission: "A very pleasing feature of President Sessions' administration is the friendly relationship maintained with Government officials, public institutions and prominent men throughout

---

<sup>213</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Bachelor of Science in Agriculture," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1911), 1. J. Wyley Sessions's degree has two interesting features: first, his name is misspelled, spelling Wyley as Wiley; second, the diploma was signed by John A. Widtsoe, then president of Utah Agricultural College in 1911. Later, Sessions would be associated with Elder John A. Widtsoe when he became involved with Church Education.

<sup>214</sup> Heber J. Grant, "Letter from the First Presidency to J. Wyley Sessions, June 6, 1919," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1919), 1.

the Union.”<sup>215</sup> This ability to establish and maintain friendly relationships was going to prove valuable for J. Wyley Sessions as he worked with the university officials and with the people of Moscow, Idaho. They left South Africa on June 1 and arrived in Salt Lake City on September 25, 1926. The years of missionary experience were going to serve the Sessions well in their new assignment. “One must make a friend before he can make a convert was a lesson Brother Sessions had learned well as mission president.”<sup>216</sup> As the Sessions embarked on this new assignment from the Church leaders, they knew that they needed to build bridges of friendship at the university and in the community.

### **The Role of J. Wyley Sessions and Magdalen Sessions in the Establishment of the First Institute of Religion**

After arriving in Moscow on October 16 with their entire family, which consisted of two children, Marc and Rosamonde, the Sessions “set to work to find out what our assignment really was.”<sup>217</sup> J. Wyley had grown up in southern Idaho and was well aware of the animosity that still existed among some citizens of Idaho in the northern part of the state toward the Mormons in the south. When they arrived in Moscow, J. Wyley remembers that the residents there wondered what he and his family were doing in northern Idaho. “Who is this fellow that is now assigned, this man Sessions. What’s his duty up here; what’s he want to do?”<sup>218</sup> There was speculation and rumors that J. Wyley Sessions, who at one time had been an agricultural agent in Pocatello, was trying to “Mormonize the University of Idaho. They felt that I was there to try and find a way

---

<sup>215</sup> Talmage, "Homeward Bound," 524.

<sup>216</sup> Ward H. Magleby, "1926 Another Beginning Moscow Idaho: A Solid Foundation Is Laid for the Institute Program," *Impact: Weekday Religious Education Quarterly*, Winter 1968, 23.

<sup>217</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 4.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

where we could move the university, at least the agricultural college, to somewhere in south Idaho.”<sup>219</sup>

The discourse here is revealing; Sessions is speculating on rumors that were circulating in town. The fear was that he was there in Moscow to “Mormonize” the University of Idaho. The noun Mormon (the name of the ancient prophet who was one of the authors of the Book of Mormon) has been switched to a verb, to “Mormonize.” The implication was that Sessions was going to try to “convert” the university to Mormonism. From the founding of the Church in 1830, Latter-day Saints have had the reputation, somewhat justified, of being missionary-minded to convert others to their religious faith. Joseph Smith claimed in a revelation received in 1831 that the Lord told him, “And this gospel shall be preached unto every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”<sup>220</sup> Theologically, Latter-day Saints felt a sense of duty to share what they knew and believed with others. This was how some of the residents of Moscow were feeling about J. Wyley Sessions. And along with the converting them to Mormonism was the corollary of moving the University, or at least the college of agriculture to the southern part of the state where most of the Latter-day Saints lived. In simple terms, the people of Moscow were suspicious of Sessions’ motives.

Historian Dennis Wright sums up the feelings of the community: “Upon arriving in Moscow, Sessions received a mixed reception from community leaders who felt that the Mormons had sent a representative to the university as part of a political ploy to

---

<sup>219</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>220</sup> Joseph Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet with Some Additions by His Successors in the Presidency of the Church* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989), p. 276.

gather support for moving the university to Boise.”<sup>221</sup> Not only were there rumors and speculation, the ministers’ association, some members of the faculty, and some of the business people took action: they formed a committee to watch and monitor the actions of J. Wyley Sessions. The committee appointed one Fred Fulton, an insurance agent in Moscow, as chairman of the committee and assigned him to keep track of the actions of the new Mormon in town, J. Wyley Sessions. J. Wyley realized how some of the residents were reacting to his presence in town and at the university. In the 1965 oral interview, Sessions claimed that Fulton told him directly that it was his job “to keep you from Mormonizing the University of Idaho.”<sup>222</sup> Sessions summarized his feelings about what they were attempting to do: “They were appointed to oppose what I was doing.”<sup>223</sup>

After only a few weeks it became obvious to Sessions that they were monitoring his movements and his actions. . In order to become accepted at the university and in the community, J. Wyley and Magdalen became proactive to show that they were acting in good faith and they were not there to be spies or missionaries. . Both of them enrolled in graduate classes at the university, hoping that their involvement in the graduate school would provide them with opportunities to meet and interact with some professors. J. Wyley’s field of study was education and philosophy, and Magdalen studied English and social work.<sup>224</sup> In fact, while in Moscow J. Wyley Sessions completed a master’s degree in education and Magdalen took several classes toward a master’s degree as well.

---

<sup>221</sup>Wright, "Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 73.

<sup>222</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview," 13.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "The Moscow L.D.S. Institute of Religion," in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Archives, 1968), 1.

In order to be accepted within the community, J. Wyley joined the Chamber of Commerce and attended each meeting faithfully every two weeks. He made it a point to find Fred Fulton at the meetings and he would try to sit by him. . He described Fred Fulton as “the nicest fellow, just a lovely gentleman” and Sessions went out of his way to be friendly to him. Eventually at one of the Chamber of Commerce meetings, Mr. Fulton said to J. Wyley: “You son-of-a-gun, you’re the darndest fellow. I was appointed on a committee to keep you out of Moscow and every time I see you, you come in here so darn friendly that I like you better all the time.” Sessions replied, “I’m the same way. We just as well be friends.”<sup>225</sup> Finally, Fred Fulton became one of the best friends to the Sessions family. In addition to becoming a member of the Chamber of Commerce, J. Wyley joined a civic group, the Kiwanis Club. He knew that making connections there would help him win over the community. Magdalen became active in civic activities as well as joining several university activities for women.<sup>226</sup> Their friendship efforts were paying some dividends as individuals in the university and in the community came to know the Sessions and accepted them.

In an effort to show the Latter-day Saint Church’s sincere commitment to establishing a student center at the U of I, and as a gesture of good will toward the community of Moscow, Superintendent of Church Education, Adam S. Bennion, and the President of the Church, Heber J. Grant, made a visit to Moscow. They met with the local community leaders with the message that the Church was in Moscow simply to provide a religious education program to the Latter-day Saint students as part of their university

---

<sup>225</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 5.

<sup>226</sup> Magleby, "1926 Another Beginning Moscow Idaho," 23.

experience. They assured the citizens of Moscow that the Church tried to follow their students in high school and now in college to offer them religious education as part of their educational process. The Church was not there to “Mormonize” the university, nor was it there to move the university to the southern part of the state. Their visit “resulted in increased acceptance from the community and trust that the Church was sincere in its efforts to support students and promote the university.”<sup>227</sup>

During the academic year of 1926-1927 J. Wyley Sessions had as one of his priorities the task of finding a piece of property near the university that the Church could purchase for their proposed student center.<sup>228</sup> The lot that was chosen was near the university walkway which had been originally part of the James Deakin homestead. After several rounds of negotiations with the owners of the lot in March and April of 1927, the Church eventually secured title to the property with the help of the Chamber of Commerce. By May 28, 1927, the final documents were signed and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the legal owner of the property. With the property purchased, Sessions moved on to the next stages of planning the building to be constructed on the lot. J. Wyley and his wife spent a great deal of time in study and planning in order to create a building that would provide the best environment for a quality religious education program. Sessions recalls that “they secured the help of the University architect, the Engineering School, and found information and pictures of religious foundations from several other universities.”<sup>229</sup>

---

<sup>227</sup>Wright, "Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 73.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid., 73-75. Historian Dennis Wright covers in detail the real estate dealings between the Church and the locals.

<sup>229</sup>Sessions, "The Moscow L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 2.



The Church architect sent Sessions a set of plans which had “a small chapel-like building” which he rejected as being inadequate for their proposed program. The architect redesigned the building with a larger chapel, but the second set of plans was also rejected by Sessions. The architect sent a third set of plans along with “some rather sharp criticism and definate [sic] instructions that this was the building that was to be built.”<sup>230</sup> Sessions found the third set of blue prints “quite unacceptable” and he returned them. The impasse between Sessions and the Church architect was finally resolved when President Grant released the Church architect from the assignment and Arthur Price, another architect working for the Church, was called as a replacement. President Grant asked Price, “Do you think you could cooperate with the Department of Education and the people in charge at Moscow and prepare us a satisfactory building for our Seminary at the University of Idaho?” Price answered that “Yes [,] President Grant we will do the best we can and with the help of the Lord I believe we can please you.” President Grant told Price and Sessions, “Very well, then you two go ahead and get the job done and may the Lord Bless you.”<sup>231</sup>

Once Price and Sessions agreed on the design, it had to be approved by the new LDS Commissioner of Education, Joseph F. Merrill. Commissioner Merrill, who was in charge of the entire budget of Church Education, was concerned that the proposed building would be too costly. Sessions, frustrated by his negotiations with Merrill, concluded that he was the “most economical, conservative General Authority of this

---

<sup>230</sup>Ibid.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid.

dispensation.”<sup>232</sup> Sessions decided to bypass Merrill and he went to the Chamber of Commerce and to influential LDS leaders in Idaho for their support to take directly to President Grant to get his approval. With their letters of support in hand, Sessions met with President Grant. After visiting with Grant for less than an hour, he felt that he was not making any headway with the president. In frustration, Sessions finally said: “President Grant, I cannot go back to Moscow and build a little Salvation Army shanty at the University of Idaho.”<sup>233</sup> Grant understood his point, agreeing that the building must be nice. The following day Sessions met with Grant’s counselor, Charles W. Nibley, who read this message to him from President Grant: “I had a talk yesterday with Bro. Sessions, I favor giving him what he wants for our Moscow Seminary building. It must be well done since it is near the campus of the University of Idaho. See what the Arizona Temple has done for us.”<sup>234</sup>

The Church Board of Education set a budget of \$60,000 for building construction. Howard J. McKean, a contractor who built chapels for the Church, completed the building under budget; he returned \$5,000 to the Church. The excavation work on the lot started in April 1928. By the summer of 1928 the building was completed with a proposed dedication date in September 1928. The student newspaper, *The Idaho Argonaut* announced in its August 18, 1928, issue that “The church announces that the building will be finished by September 1 and will be ready for use by the time school opens in the fall.” The article commented that the Tudor-Gothic style of architecture was

---

<sup>232</sup> Sessions, "The Moscow L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 3.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

“planned to harmonize with the buildings on the campus.”<sup>235</sup> It was significant that the Latter-day Saints were trying to seek harmony architecturally and symbolically with the university.

Sociologist Armand Mauss argues that in the twenties the Church was “very much in the assimilationist mode.”<sup>236</sup> The need to fit in with the university, architecturally, academically, and socially was a strong motivator for the Church during this period. Public image along with public acceptance were very important to the Church; this was not the separatist, isolationist church of Brigham Young. Sessions found in Dr. Chenoweth, a Harvard-trained professor, a true mentor who shared with him some sound ideas on how to be a legitimate religious entity on a secular campus. Sessions commented that when Dr. Chenoweth was advising him on what he should do to create a program that the university would recognize, Chenoweth recommended that the Church “had to build a building. It had to meet the competition.”<sup>237</sup> Sessions interpreted that to mean that it had to be “better” or at least equivalent to the other buildings of the university. In attempting to do this, Sessions adopted this slogan for the Institute building: “If it’s the LDS Institute, it’s the best thing on the campus.”<sup>238</sup> Once the building was completed, Sessions held the opinion that “It is beautiful, and it was beautiful and it did attract attention and it did serve the purpose and it was the best thing on the campus.”<sup>239</sup> From J. Wyley Sessions’ perspective, the acceptance factor and the public image were both important to the success of the Institute program. J. Wyley credits his wife, who

---

<sup>235</sup> "L.D.S. Institute To Be Ready for Work in Fall," *The Idaho Argonaut*, August 18, 1928, 2.

<sup>236</sup> Mauss, *Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*: 96.

<sup>237</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 11.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

furnished the entire inside of the building, for the beauty of the building: “After we got our building, which was a beautiful thing, thanks to Magdalene . . .”<sup>240</sup>

The building had a full basement, a main floor, and the third floor had eleven apartments for twenty-two LDS male students. The basement consisted of a large recreation room, a small kitchen, a baptismal font (prior to the construction of the building, Mormon baptisms were performed in the university’s swimming pool in the Memorial Gymnasium), and several multi-purpose rooms. The main floor contained an office for the director, a library, three large classrooms, and a large chapel area for worship services that had a seating capacity for 225 people.

To the students, this new building was magnificent. Norma Geddes recalls, “By today’s standards [written in 1984] the chapel was not large, but the handsome little building resembled a cathedral to the saints in the area.”<sup>241</sup> Another coed, Katheryn Hart, who attended the university from 1928-1932, gave this description of the Institute: “The building was well planned and useful. We were free to invite our friends to the Institute and we were proud of our beautiful building.”<sup>242</sup> In 1928 Sessions was asked about the functions of the new Seminary building: “Is it just a chapel? A Mormon meeting house? A school building? A fraternity house? A club house? A Social center? Or what? It was soon found that the L.D.S. building should include some of all these functions.”<sup>243</sup> On another occasion when Sessions was asked how to describe the Institute building, he

---

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> Peterson, *Mormons on the Palouse*, 40.

<sup>242</sup> “Memory Book for the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the Moscow Institute of Religion: A Brief History of the Moscow Institute of Religion,” 7.

<sup>243</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, “Miscellaneous Notes: Four School Years at Moscow,” in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

answered: “The Moscow project was in line with the Church policy to give the Latter-day Saints freedom to attend the school of their choice anywhere and the Church would provide facilities and opportunity for them to make religion an integral part of their university training and give them a ‘church home away from home.’”<sup>244</sup>

One of the most important official validations of the significance of the construction of the new Seminary building came from Apostle John A. Widtsoe. In the summer of 1929 when Elder Widtsoe received the news that J. Wyley had been asked to transfer to Pocatello to start up the Institute program there, he wrote to him to express his appreciation for his work in Moscow. Because this was coming from an apostle, an important position in the Church leadership, and from the former Commissioner of Education, it indeed carried more meaning. Widtsoe wrote, “I am happy to hear of the splendid building that has been erected in Moscow largely as I know, through your efforts.”<sup>245</sup> Much of the credit for getting the Seminary building completed (a “splendid building”) belongs to J. Wyley Sessions. John A. Widtsoe had first-hand knowledge, through the deliberations of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, about J. Wyley’s role and contribution in spearheading the construction of that building.

### **Naming of the “Seminary Building” as the Institute of Religion**

As the plans were being made to establish the Latter-day Saint student center in Moscow, the Church leaders referred to the program as the “Seminary building” or as the “collegiate Seminary.” Originally, Seminary was the term used for the high school

---

<sup>244</sup> ———, “The Moscow L.D.S. Institute of Religion,” in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, L.D.S. Church Archives, 1967), 1.

<sup>245</sup> John A. Widtsoe, “Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, August 2, 1929,” in *J. Wyley Sessions' Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1929), 1.

religious education program started in 1912; when it was decided to provide a similar program for college students, the term “Seminary” seemed appropriate. As the building was nearing completion, according to J. Wyley, he had a conversation with Dr. Jay Glover Eldridge, Dean of the Faculty and Professor of Germanic Languages and Literature as well as Professor of Modern Languages. Eldridge had received his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale. He arrived on the campus of the U of I in 1901 and two years later he was made Dean of the Faculty.<sup>246</sup> The two were walking down Deakin Street as they were conversing. Dr. Eldridge commented to Sessions, “You were pretty smart to get the land, how did you get it?” Sessions explained the story how the Church had obtained the land, a prime piece of real estate near the university. Then Dr. Eldridge asked, “What are you going to call it?” Without waiting for an answer, Eldridge commented, “Your name, you can’t call it the Seminary, it isn’t a Seminary. You’ve spoiled that anyway with your high school seminaries, you can’t call it a Seminary.” Sessions responded that he didn’t know what they were going to call it and admitted that he had not thought about it. Eldridge thought a moment and added,

“I’ll tell you what the name is, what you see up there is the Latter-day Saint Institute of Religion at the University of Idaho north campus. When we build ours over here (he pointed to his church) it will be the Methodist Institute of Religion at the University of Idaho.”<sup>247</sup>

Sessions passed on Eldridge’s suggestion to Commissioner Joseph F. Merrill who accepted it and had it officially approved by the General Board of Education at their

---

<sup>246</sup> A. J. G. Priest, "The Dean," *The Beta Theta Pi*, June 1956, 454.

<sup>247</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview," 12.

meeting on April 17, 1928.<sup>248</sup> After securing approval of the new name, Merrill immediately wrote to Sessions, addressing the letter “To the Director of the Latter-day Saints Institute of Religion at Moscow, Idaho” as an indication that the name was now official.

The term “institute” was not a new designation for a Latter-day Saint educational program by any means. William E. Berrett’s research into Church education asserts that “institute” was first used in the context of Church education by Karl G. Maeser; originally, Maeser used the term institute to refer to his work in the Twentieth Ward in Salt Lake City when he was referring to the literary and cultural societies he organized in that ward in 1873. These societies were the forerunners of the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association.<sup>249</sup>

The name of Dr. Jay Glover Eldridge will always be remembered in the educational history of the Church for his contribution of suggesting the name of Institute of Religion. J. Wyley Sessions in his oral history specifically identifies Eldridge as the person who named the Institute. When the building was nearing completion, Sessions made this observation: “And it’s named the Institute now. Mr. [Dr.] Eldridge had named it the LDS Institute of Religion.”<sup>250</sup> Dr. Eldridge had a sincere interest in the Institute of Religion building and program. In his diary for 1928, on Wednesday, March 15, he

---

<sup>248</sup> Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System*: 48.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 8.

referred to attending a function and made this note: “Mr. Sessions on Mormon Seminary main speaker.”<sup>251</sup>

A month later, on April 1, 1928, Dr. Eldridge made another reference to the Institute building. Not everyone on campus was pleased to have the Latter-day Saint building so close to campus. Norma Geddes referred to how she felt like an outsider at the university because of being a Mormon and her perception was the sororities did not pledge some women because of their religion.<sup>252</sup> Eldridge noted in his diary that three girls came to visit him to complain about the “Mormon house” that was going to be built so near the campus. Eldridge wrote, “I argued for it & anyhow too late. Well started bldg.” He informed the girls that he had “argued for it”—that he was in favor of having the Institute close to the campus. Besides, the building was well on its way to completion; the girls were too late in voicing their disapproval of the building.<sup>253</sup>

While some individual students continued to harbor some prejudice against Mormons and resented their new building near campus, at an institutional level there seemed to be official acceptance for the Institute building and improved relations between the university and the Latter-day Saints. In many ways an era of “good feelings” had begun. Was this feeling of acceptance and recognition carried over into the official publication of the university, the catalog? For the year of 1926-1927, the year the Sessions arrived in Moscow and began their activities and study to determine what was needed for the Latter-day Saint students, in the section of “Religious,” a subsection of

---

<sup>251</sup> Jay Glover Eldridge, "Diaries, 1892-1962," in *Jay Glover Eldridge Diaries, 1892-1962* (Moscow, ID: University of Idaho Libraries, Special Collections and Archives, 1928), 60.

<sup>252</sup> Peterson, *Mormons on the Palouse*, 39.

<sup>253</sup> Eldridge, "Jay Glover Diaries, 1892-1962," 86.



“Organizations,” the following religious groups were mentioned: Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., DeSmet Club (for Roman Catholics), The Episcopal Club, The Wesley Foundation (for members of the Methodist Episcopal Church), the Inkwell (a branch of the Lutheran Student Association), the Christian Science Society, and the Westminster Guild (for young women of the Presbyterian Church).<sup>254</sup> Understandably there was no mention of the Latter-day Saints because the publication of the catalog preceded the arrival and activities of the Sessions. The next year’s catalog (for 1927-1928) gave the same listing as the previous year; there was no mention of the Latter-day Saints. The following year’s catalog (for 1928-1929) reproduced the same religious listing. The catalog for 1929-1930 shortened the space given the religious organizations; here again, no mention of the L.D.S. Institute. The catalog for 1930-1931 contained the same shortened listing of the previous year. If a Latter-day Saint student new to the U of I had arrived at Moscow during the years 1926-1931, he or she would not have been able to find out about the Institute of Religion by reading the university’s official catalog. The Institute had received some university acceptance, but it still was not in the official catalog where most religious groups continued to be mentioned year after year.

While the official university catalog did not give any space to the Institute program, the local Moscow newspaper gave the Latter-day Saints equal space with the other denominations in town. Following a custom of the university, the Friday before the first day of instruction, each church held an open house for the incoming students. For 1928,

---

<sup>254</sup> "Thirty-Fourth Annual Catalog of the University of Idaho with Announcements for 1926-1927," in *University of Idaho Bulletin*, ed. University of Idaho (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho, 1926-1927), 36-37.

the year when the Institute building had been dedicated, the announcement of the upcoming “fall student reception” appeared in the Moscow *Daily Star-Mirror* on Wednesday, October 3, 1928. The newspaper announced, “Churches Prepare for Annual Fall Student Reception: Friday Night Nearly Every Denomination in the City Will Throw Its Doors Open.”<sup>255</sup> The students were invited to attend the reception at the church of their choice; each church prepared some type of program or activity and served refreshments. The Latter-day Saint announcement appeared along with nine other denominations: “Latter-day Saints, J. Wesley [sic] Sessions, District Pres. The Students of the Latter Day Saints church will meet in the recreational hall in the new Institute. Music, dancing and a social time will be enjoyed.”<sup>256</sup>

### **Dedication of the LDS Institute of Religion on September 26, 1928**

During the summer of 1928 the completion of the Institute building was imminent. The U of I’s student newspaper, *Idaho Argonaut*, reported on August 18, 1928, that the Institute building was nearly complete and would be ready for classes during the fall semester.<sup>257</sup> J. Wyley Sessions made arrangements with Church headquarters for the dedication ceremonies to be held on Tuesday, September 25, 1928. Because of his personal involvement with the initial planning of the Institute of Religion program, the First Presidency decided to send Second Counselor, Charles W. Nibley, to Moscow to present an address and to pronounce a “dedicatory prayer.”<sup>258</sup> Accompanying Nibley was

---

<sup>255</sup> “Churches Prepare for Annual Fall Student Reception. Friday Night nearly Every Denomination in the City Will Throw Its Doors Open,” *The Daily Star-Mirror*, October 3, 1928, 6.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> “L.D.S. Institute To Be Ready for Work in Fall,” 2.

<sup>258</sup> It is a Latter-day Saint custom to dedicate church buildings--chapels, temples, schools, etc.--by pronouncing a prayer and dedicating the building to the Lord. The custom was started by Joseph Smith

Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, the Commissioner of Education, who was scheduled to present an address at the dedication.

Circumstances worked out that the Institute dedication was happening simultaneously with the inauguration of a new president of the U of I, Frederick James Kelly, so all the important state officials were already in Moscow. Many of them, including the governor of Idaho, H. C. Baldrige, also attended the Institute dedication. The Dedicatory Service of the Moscow L.D.S. Institute was held that Tuesday, September 25 at 4:00 p.m. The printed program from the Dedicatory Service indicates that three of the principal actors in getting the building completed, namely J. Wyley Sessions, Charles W. Nibley, and Joseph F. Merrill had important parts in the Dedicatory Service. Sessions gave a “Report of the Building” at the start of the ceremony. He was followed by an address by Commissioner Joseph F. Merrill. Charles W. Nibley delivered an address and presented the “dedicatory prayer.” William R. Sloan, mission president of the Northwestern States Mission, gave the final benediction to the program. At the conclusion of the ceremony, there was an open house for the public to view the building.

One student, who was involved in the Dedicatory Service, Aldon Tall, in the transcribed version of the oral history of his life, recalls the service. He and his twin brother, Asael Tall, played a violin duet as a musical prelude to the ceremony. Because of his musical talent, Sessions invited Aldon to lead the gathering in the opening song, “How Firm a Foundation.” Sessions handed him a song book that morning and asked him

---

when he pronounced a dedicatory prayer in dedicating the Kirtland Temple in 1836. See James B. Allen, and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*, 2nd, revised and enlarged ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1992), 109.

to lead the music for the ceremony. In the printed program Sessions included the words to the song, printing only three verses of the seven verses. While Aldon Tall was leading the music, he was following the words and music in the song book. The congregation stopped singing after the third verse, but Aldon kept on singing. He vividly recalls the experience: "They only had three verses on the printed program, and I started singing the fourth verse. I was about the only one singing, and how bad it was!"<sup>259</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, realizing what had happened quickly came to the rescue by patting Aldon on the shoulder and saying, "Brother Tall, I only printed three verses. Would you please accept my apology?"<sup>260</sup> Tall remembers how Sessions had taken the blame and helped him feel less embarrassed.

Of J. Wyley Sessions and his wife, Magdalen, Tall remembers them fondly: ". . . he was very inspirational man. I dearly loved that man and his lovely wife."<sup>261</sup> Coed Katheryn Hart summarizes her memory of the dedication: "It was a great occasion for a beautiful building which came to be the center of church and social activities of the LDS students there. It was home away from home for many of them, and the Sessions were father and mother to all."<sup>262</sup>

### **The Purpose of the Institute of Religion and the Curriculum Taught**

During the summer of 1928 as the Institute building was in its final stages of construction, it was time to plan for the fall semester. The Church had a building and a

---

<sup>259</sup> Aldon Tall, "Dr. Aldon Tall's Life History: An Oral History Conducted by Dr. Gary Shumway," (Rigby, Idaho), 141.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 141-42.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>262</sup> "Memory Book for the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the Moscow Institute of Religion: A Brief History of the Moscow Institute of Religion," 7.

program director, what it needed now was a written statement of its purpose and a curriculum. Sessions began to ask himself that summer, “What are you going to teach? What will the curriculum of the Institute be?”<sup>263</sup> The high school Seminary curriculum had been developed since 1912 and was being effectively taught; it was a three-year cycle of teaching the Old Testament, the New Testament, and then a year’s course in Church History and Doctrine. For the university and college students, a new curriculum was needed.

Commissioner of Church Education, Joseph F. Merrill, took over the Department of Education at the resignation of Adam S. Bennion on February 1, 1928.<sup>264</sup> Merrill’s experience as a professor at the university level and his academic degrees in science qualified him to give Sessions advice on what the proposed curriculum should be for the first Institute of Religion. In his letter to Sessions on June 6, 1928, he suggested that Sessions should be “busily engaged” in outlining his courses for the fall semester.<sup>265</sup> Merrill announced to Sessions that the Church was planning to start university Sunday Schools for the Utah Agricultural College and for the U of U. He recommended that Sessions use the same format for the Institute in Moscow. Merrill stated what he considered the purpose of these Sunday morning meetings: “The primary purpose of this Sunday School could be to enable students to become settled in their faith by harmonizing and reconciling the truths of the Gospel with the truths of science and

---

<sup>263</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 8.

<sup>264</sup> Bell, "Adam Samuel Bennion: Superintendent of L.D.S. Education, 1919-1928," 97-98.

<sup>265</sup> Joseph F. Merrill, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, June 6, 1928," in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

scholarship that they are learning in college.”<sup>266</sup> Additionally, Merrill suggested that Sessions use the same format that was going to be used by the Utah schools: they were going to invite experts in the fields of biology, philosophy, psychology, etc. to present a lecture to the students in outlining the accepted theories of their respective disciplines and to point out the facts upon which the theories are based and “thus attempt to show that there is no irreconcilable conflict between scientific truths and religious truths.”<sup>267</sup> Merrill specifically advised Sessions to arrange the Sunday School course to consist of thirty or more lectures.

For the weekday courses, Merrill requested that Sessions study the situation and present recommendations to him for consideration by the General Board of Education.

Merrill presented Sessions with some possible courses to teach: “The Ethics of the New Testament” on the basis of Dean Milton Bennion’s book; a course in comparative

---

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, trained as a scientist in chemistry and physics, strongly believed in the harmony of science and religion. In one of his radio broadcasts from Salt Lake City, he talked about the “Marvels Revealed by Science.” In the address, he made this statement: “The conflict between science and religion’ was a familiar expression a few years ago--not so common now. Rightly viewed and interpreted, do you think there can be any conflict between the facts of science and the truths of religion? ‘Truth is truth wherever found on heathen or on Christian ground.’ Assuredly there can be no conflict between two truths.” See ———, *The Truth-Seeker and Mormonism: A Series of Radio Addresses* (Independence, MO: Zion’s Printing and Publishing Company, 1946), 18. Merrill was not the only LDS scientist to hold this view. This issue of reconciling science and religion is too large to handle here, but allow me to summarize three major LDS views on this matter. First, the “superorthodox” (Jan Shipp’s term) or conservative view, as exemplified by Joseph Fielding Smith and his son-in-law, Bruce R. McConkie, claims that religious knowledge outweighs any science and that evolution is “false doctrine” and LDS members cannot be “theistic evolutionists” because they claim that position to be impossible according to their interpretation of God’s word. The second major position is that of Merrill and John Widtsoe that “true science” and “true religion” are in perfect harmony. A third position of some LDS scientists is that science and religion operate in two separate spheres. Evolution can be proven scientifically--but that does not diminish truths in the field of religion. Regarding the controversy in the LDS Church on the issue of evolution, in 1958 President McKay issued this statement: “The church has issued no official statement on the subject of the theory of evolution.” This leaves the door open for individual interpretation. There is a vast body of literature on this issue. See Gary James Bergera, and Ronald Priddis, *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1985). Chapter 4, “Organic Evolution Controversy,” pp. 131-171 provides an excellent summary of the major viewpoints on science, religion, and organic evolution.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

religion; a course in ecclesiastical history; an outline course in the history and doctrines of the Church. Sessions was advised to spend sufficient time on determining what courses to teach for the weekday classes so that he would be ready to teach them when the fall semester was to begin.

In the same letter of June 6, Sessions received the news that the Advisory Committee to Commissioner Joseph F. Merrill unanimously approved the recommendation that a doctor's degree be a requirement for a teacher in any of the Church's institutes at a major university. Merrill recommended that Sessions "plan for a leave of absence beginning in June 1929, that you may proceed without further delay to get your Doctor's Degree."<sup>268</sup> The reasoning behind this decision was that university students should have the same confidence in the scholarship of their institute teachers as they have in the scholarship of their university teachers. There was no doubt that Commissioner Merrill was trying to raise the level of scholarship for the teachers in the Department of Education of the Church. Merrill informed Sessions that another teacher already teaching for the Department, Sidney B. Sperry was entering the University of Chicago during the summer of 1928 to complete his doctorate in Egyptology. Finally, in the same letter Merrill informed Sessions that the Education Department had begun to construct an Institute building on the campus of the Utah Agricultural College.

In reply to Merrill's letter of June 6, Sessions wrote to Merrill on June 15, 1928. He informed the commissioner that he had been working on the organization of the courses that he was going to teach for fall semester. He admitted that the planning of the

---

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

courses was a challenge: "I am finding that these problems call for a lot of study and demand careful thought."<sup>269</sup> Sessions liked the suggestions that Merrill had offered him to teach a course on "New Testament Ethics" and a course in comparative religion. Sessions already had an interest in teaching a course in comparative religions and he had already been gathering materials for such a course. He then asked Merrill for his opinion on the best approach for teaching the Bible to college students. Should he use the literary approach, the sociological, the historical, the philosophical, or the theological? Sessions admitted that of all these various approaches to teaching the Bible that "I do not know enough about these to know which is the best for the purpose we have in mind." He wanted to "give a course that would translate the Bible in terms of human life and show that it has grown out of human experience with God and is therefore vital in human life to-day."<sup>270</sup> Sessions concluded the letter with a statement that he would welcome any help and suggestions that Merrill would offer.

A month after Sessions wrote to Commissioner Merrill, he replied to Sessions to clarify the objective of the Institute curriculum. Merrill began the letter noting that with "this collegiate Seminary work we are, of course, starting on a new thing in the Church."<sup>271</sup> He asserted that if in the Institute or collegiate Seminary program they keep their objective clearly in mind that it would prove helpful. Merrill articulated the objective of the Institute program:

---

<sup>269</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "Letter to Joseph F. Merrill, June 15, 1928," in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>271</sup> Joseph F. Merrill, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928," in *Sessions, James Wyley (1895-1977)* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church History Library and Archives, 1928), 1.



“And may I say that this objective, as I see it, is to enable our young people attending the colleges to make the necessary adjustments between the things they have been taught in the Church and the things they are learning in the university, to enable them to become firmly settled in their faith as members of the Church. The big question then, is, what means and methods can be employed to help them to make these reconciliations and adjustments. The primary purpose, therefore, is not to teach them theology. It is not to prepare them for Seminary teachers or preachers of the Gospel. We should, therefore, continually hold before our minds that we want to hold them in the Church, make them active, intelligent, sincere Latter-day Saints. We want to keep them from growing cold in the faith and indifferent to their obligations as Church members. We want to help them to see that it is perfectly reasonable and logical to be really sincere Latter-day Saints.”<sup>272</sup>

Merrill cautioned Sessions that sometimes when young people go to college and there study science and philosophy “they are inclined to become materialistic, to forget God, and to believe that the knowledge of man is all-sufficient.”<sup>273</sup> Furthermore, Merrill continued, “that modern scholarship is thought to reveal many crudities and absurdities in our religious faith that the theories of evolution in all its phases makes religious truths appear as crude absurdities.”<sup>274</sup> Merrill, a scientist, felt that religious truths and scientific truths were not in conflict and that they could be resolved:

Personally, I am convinced that religion is as reasonable as science; that religious truths and scientific truths nowhere are in conflict; that there is one great unifying purpose extending throughout all creation; that we are living in a wonderful, though at the present time deeply mysterious world; and that there is an all-wise, all-powerful Creator back of it all. Can this same faith be developed in the minds of our collegiate and university students?<sup>275</sup>

---

<sup>272</sup> ———, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928," in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

<sup>273</sup> ———, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928," 2.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> ———, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928," 2.

Merrill summarized the objective of the Institute program: “Our collegiate institutes are established as means to this end.”<sup>276</sup> Commissioner Merrill had now articulated the objective of the Institute program and explained why it existed. From his perspective, the Institute was the religious answer to science and secularism. It was now up to Sessions to put into application the objective that Merrill had pronounced. To classify the roles of Merrill and Sessions in the establishment of the first Institute, I interpret Commissioner Merrill’s role as the intellectual architect, the person who designs and creates the vision of the program. Sessions’ role is more that of the contractor, the person who follows the plans and builds what the architect has designed. Armand Mauss, a sociologist of religion, interprets what Sessions was doing at the Moscow Institute was part of the processes of reconciliation and intellectual exploration. He summarizes his argument: “The original idea was to assist Mormon youth in articulating and reconciling their religious teachings with the wisdom of the world to which they would be increasingly exposed as part of the national assimilation of the Mormons.”<sup>277</sup> On August 4, 1928, J. Wyley replied to Merrill’s letter of July 26. Sessions concurred with Commissioner Merrill’s vision of the major objectives for the Institute program. He wrote, “Your outline of our objectives seem[s] to me to be exactly correct.” He continued in his letter to reword the objectives and gave his interpretation of them. He concluded his letter, committing himself to helping students: “We must help them and I am looking for

---

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Armand L. Mauss, "Refuge and Retrenchment: The Mormon Quest for Identity," in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 33.

courses and methods that will best serve us in obtaining these ends.”<sup>278</sup> For the academic year 1928-1929, J. Wyley Sessions attempted to offer courses to help his students; he felt that “Some of these students meet real problems for they understand neither their religion nor their science.”<sup>279</sup> *The Idaho Argonaut* summarized the function and curriculum of the Institute: “The distinctive function of the L.D.S. institute is to maintain a university school of religion, offering courses in Bible history, Bible literature, ethics, comparative religion, etc.”<sup>280</sup> Sessions also sought the best instructional methods to teach them.

In the J. Wyley Sessions Papers at Brigham Young University there is an envelope with Sessions’ writing on the outside: “Reg. [registration] cards of students who took courses at Moscow L. D. S. Institute 1928-29 J. W. S.” There are twenty-seven registration cards; four individuals had registered for two separate classes, so the registration cards are for twenty-three students. By year in school, there were: 5 freshmen, 2 sophomores, 10 juniors, 4 seniors, and 2 graduate students. Magdalen Sessions, J. Wyley’s wife and a graduate student, enrolled for one class. In searching through the list of enrolled students, I found the names of Irene Luke—her father was George L. Luke, the physics professor who had visited Salt Lake City to talk with the Church leaders about building a student center in Moscow—the other name was Pearl Wilde, her father was Professor Wilde, the other professor working for a student center. Seeing that these two professors had children who would benefit from the LDS Institute, it helps explain their personal motivation for wanting to provide a quality religious

---

<sup>278</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "Letter to Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, August 4, 1928," in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> "L.D.S. Institute To Be Ready for Work in Fall," 2.

program for their own children. The class for which the students enrolled was “History of New Testament.”<sup>281</sup>

### **Contributors and Contributions to the Establishment of the First Institute**

To present a more complete and accurate representation of how Sessions created and established the first Institute, further details about who helped him and what sources he used in creating the curriculum need to come to light. Besides Commissioner Merrill, the real architect of the program, the person to whom Sessions gives the most credit is Professor C. W. Chenoweth of the Philosophy Department at the U of I. Sessions introduces Dr. Chenoweth in his oral history with these words: “One of the men at the University of Idaho who was specially [sic] helpful to me was Dr. C. W. Chenoweth.”<sup>282</sup> Chenoweth was trained as a minister and served as a chaplain in the First World War; afterwards he attended Harvard where he obtained his doctorate in philosophy. After graduating, he went to Moscow to teach and then he became the head of the Philosophy Department. In addition to his teaching at the university, he served as a minister to a small church outside of Moscow where he would preach every Sunday. Sessions became acquainted with Dr. Chenoweth when he started his master’s program in philosophy and education. He became a mentor to Sessions: “Chenoweth helped me in every step that I took.”<sup>283</sup> Their student-professor relationship expanded to become good friends. Sessions invited Dr. Chenoweth to accompany him when he was invited to the Latter-day Saint-sponsored Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. Dr. Chenoweth was the main speaker at an

---

<sup>281</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "Registration Cards of Students Who Took Courses at Moscow L.D.S. Institute 1928-29," in *J. Wyley Sessions' Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1929), Cards 1-27.

<sup>282</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 7.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

afternoon session of their “Leadership Week” and gave a wonderful address that was well-received by the audience, most of whom were Latter-day Saints.<sup>284</sup>

As a mentor to J. Wyley, Dr. Chenoweth advised him on what he needed to do in establishing the institute. Sessions admitted when he first went to Moscow, “We didn’t know what to do. The Church didn’t know what to do. There were no patterns, and we had no patterns to follow. No advisors.”<sup>285</sup> Sessions credits Chenoweth with offering him good ideas and good advice. At the dedication of the Institute building in the fall of 1928, John Hart, the stake president of Rigby, Idaho, offered one of the prayers. In his prayer he asked the Lord to bless Dr. Chenoweth “who had been so faithful and so kind and helpful in all his activities, and he’d lend us of his great intellect and his talents to guide and help us establish the Institute.”<sup>286</sup> When Sessions was looking for answers of what needed to be done to establish a successful religious education program, he found a source of helpful ideas in Dr. Chenoweth. He told Sessions that “This thing [the Institute] has to go. Not only the Mormons, but everybody else.”<sup>287</sup> Chenoweth explained to Sessions what he needed to do: first, he advised him that “you must have some sort of activity within your church you’ve got to have planned.” Second, “You must have courses of study.” This would be the curriculum that Sessions was struggling to create. Third, “you must have a building.” Chenoweth’s vision of an effective religious education program was a comprehensive program with activities, with courses of study, and all of these needed to

---

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview," 11.

<sup>286</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 8.

<sup>287</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview," 11.

be housed in a building near the campus dedicated to the needs of students.<sup>288</sup> Chenoweth advised that the program had to “meet the competition,” which Sessions interpreted as being of such quality that university students would want to be involved in such a program.

In addition to the advice and ideas from Dr. Chenoweth, Sessions sought a number of other sources for help. It was logical that he asked help from Brigham Young University. He wrote to BYU, but all he received was a pamphlet written by a Professor Lambert and a letter on how to make a speech for Latter-day Saints by a Professor Morley. A second source, and a much more productive one, was the University of Illinois. Sessions described what happened: “I wrote to the University of Illinois, one of the leading universities in the country in the field of religious education, there was springing up on the periphery of their campus what they were calling religious foundations.” Sessions was aware of the religious foundations at the University of Illinois. He received a positive result from his correspondence to Illinois. “I got a whole stack of stuff from President Walters of the University of Illinois . . .”<sup>289</sup> Besides the University of Illinois, Sessions corresponded with other universities and some of them responded: “Lamph from Missouri, Walker of Pennsylvania. Brother Mathers a Presbyterian of Idaho.”<sup>290</sup> Sessions openly admits that he borrowed ideas for curriculum from all of these varied sources.

---

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

Another unique and somewhat unexpected source for the curriculum came directly from the U of I. When J. Wyley and Magdalen registered for graduate work in philosophy and education, each of these departments helped the Sessions in their search for ideas and materials for the curriculum. According to J. Wyley, “They surveyed every state university, got the catalogs for me, gave me a room to study, some of them used to come in to help me, we were so interested in getting this thing [the LDS Institute] established so it could be a pattern all over the United States.”<sup>291</sup> Once J. Wyley had received all these resources and materials, “I studied courses in religion, and there were a flood of them, . . . the English of the Bible, or the literature of the Bible, or the poetry of the Bible, or the Bible as literature and all sorts of things.”<sup>292</sup> He understood that the courses developed for the curriculum of the Institute needed to be “college courses,” meaning they needed to have some breadth and depth and academic rigor. He reasoned, “They should be pursued with intellectual vigor. They should be really college courses, worthy of the college.”<sup>293</sup>

In addition to the catalogs that the various schools sent him, they sent textbooks and course outlines as well for the religious courses taught on each campus. Sessions’ next task was to organize the materials he had received and write his own course outline and syllabus for each course that he was going to offer in the Institute program. Sessions admitted that he was a “greenhorn” in writing curriculum and instruction for college level religious courses. His expertise was in agronomy, not religious education. Once the

---

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 12.

course outline and syllabus were written for each course, with the help of “certain wonderful friends” and the suggestions of the university, they were submitted for academic review. The U of I had already received from the University of Illinois their “conditions and standards under which a university could grant credit for courses in religious foundations as they called it.”<sup>294</sup> Sessions claimed that it was a great day for him personally and a great day for religious education when the president of U of I invited him to witness the presentation of the courses Sessions submitted to be approved for college credit. U of I accepted the courses and allowed for eight hours in religion that could be counted for graduation. The credit was issued either in the field of history, or depending on the course, in the field of philosophy. When Sessions witnessed the university’s official acceptance of the courses, in a celebratory mood, he declared: “I knew the Mormon Church was the only church at that time that could meet the standards we were setting up for the institutes. The other churches couldn’t do it. They didn’t have the money, they didn’t have the vision, and they couldn’t do it! Well, we could. And it did become—we built a beautiful thing, . . .”<sup>295</sup>

### **The Success of J. Wyley and Magdalen Sessions at the Institute of Religion in Moscow, Idaho**

Measuring the success of the first Institute of Religion is a subjective activity at best, but from many perspectives there are several indicators that demonstrate the effects of the program. First, there are multiple sources that show that many students were involved. Although mere numbers do not necessarily indicate success or failure, numbers

---

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 12.



can indicate participation and involvement. From the registration cards that were collected by J. Wyley Sessions, there were twenty-three students who enrolled in the “History of New Testament” class.<sup>296</sup> Arrington’s research into the first Institute published in 1967 from information “supplied the writer by J. Wyley and Magdalen Sessions” claims that the first classes “were given by Elder Sessions in the Fall of 1927, when fifty-seven Idaho collegians enrolled.”<sup>297</sup>

The official institutional records kept by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are published each year in the “Seminaries and Institutes of Religion Annual Report.” For the “Annual Report for 2010,” there is a section in the report for “Milestones in Church Education.” For the year 1926 this is the entry: “The first Institute of Religion classes were held near the campus of the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho (25 students).”<sup>298</sup> In the same report is provided enrollment figures by year. The first year for Institute was 1926-1927 and the report shows 25 students. The next year (1927-1928) shows 57 students (with just one Institute). The year of 1928-1929 shows an enrollment of 129 students and still the Moscow Institute was the only one in operation. In fall 1929 the second Institute at Logan, Utah, at the Utah Agricultural College had been established; the third institute in Pocatello, Idaho was beginning the same semester. The numbers of enrolled students jumped in 1929-1930 (because of three Institutes) to 363 students.<sup>299</sup>

---

<sup>296</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, “Registration Cards of Students Who Took Courses at Moscow L.D.S. Institute 1928-29.”

<sup>297</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, “The Founding of the L.D.S. Institutes of Religion,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 2 (1967): 142.

<sup>298</sup> “Seminaries and Institutes of Religion: Annual Report for 2010,” (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 2.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

Historian Dennis Wright's research into the enrollments of the Moscow Institute indicates that by the time the Sessions were asked to transfer to Pocatello at the end of spring semester of 1929 the enrollment had increased to ninety-eight students.<sup>300</sup> J. Wyley wrote a term paper on January 21, 1927, for his Philosophy 105 class in which he treated the topic of the "Moral and Religious Environment at the University of Idaho."<sup>301</sup> As part of his research he gathered data on the religious affiliations of the students and the faculty. Sessions discovered that of the student body of approximately 1208 students in his study sample, 92 of them indicated at registration a preference for the LDS religion, which is 7.6%. Of the 82 faculty members, 4 gave LDS as their denomination, which is 4.6%. The 92 LDS students simply showed the potential of students who could have been involved in the Institute. Aldon Tall commented in his oral history for his first year at the U of I that "We didn't go to church. They had no LDS people to start up a church." For his second year, J. Wyley Sessions had begun the religious education program and Aldon Tall recalls that "we had sixty-eight students in the student body of nineteen hundred."<sup>302</sup>

A final source on students involved in the Institute comes from coed Katheryn Hart. She does not give exact numbers, but "As I recall, there were well over 100 students those first years who attended church and other activities, and many of them enrolled in the classes that were held each day in the Institute." Hart's final assessment of

---

<sup>300</sup> Wright, "Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 79.

<sup>301</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "Moral and Religious Environment at the University of Idaho," in *J. Wyley Sessions Collection* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1927).

<sup>302</sup> Tall, "Dr. Aldon Tall's Life History: An Oral History Conducted by Dr. Gary Shumway," 140.

the effect of the Institute: “It was a vital force in the lives of the LDS students on campus.”<sup>303</sup>

The number of students who were involved in the Institute is only one measure of the effects of the first Institute of Religion. Beyond the numbers of students affected, over the years individual students have left written statements about how the Institute affected their lives. Katheryn Hart had written that the Institute was a “vital force in the lives of the LDS students.” She explained what she meant by “vital force”—“We enrolled in and enjoyed the various religion classes taught by Dr. Sessions, and we dearly loved that fine man. . . . [the Institute building] which came to be the center of church and social activities of the LDS students there.”<sup>304</sup> The students valued the religious education with its intellectual stimulus as well as the social and spiritual dimensions that it provided. The students enrolled in the Institute all seemed to agree that J. Wyley and his wife, Magdalen, were loved and appreciated by the students.

It is no surprise that the faithful Latter-day Saint students found the Institute program and the leaders to be inspirational. What adds credence to the claim that the IRM supplemented the university experience of the Latter-day Saint students comes from an outside source. Rafe Gibbs, who served as the “Director of Information at the University of Idaho,” once wrote his own personal tribute to the LDS Institute at the U of I. As a freshman in Moscow in 1930, he attended a dance at the Institute for his first social event at the university. He was a member of another faith, but he was welcomed by the students

---

<sup>303</sup> “Memory Book for the 75th Anniversary of the Founding of the Moscow Institute of Religion: A Brief History of the Moscow Institute of Religion,” 7.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

attending the dance. He commented on what he experienced: "I liked the clean look of the LDS students. I liked their spirit. The dance was a time for fun, and the LDS students were having fun."<sup>305</sup> What was more important to Gibbs was as he became better acquainted with the LDS students he noticed some things beyond their cleanliness and their spirit: "They were at the University to get the best possible education, and they had a burning ambition to make the most of that education. It seemed as if this was not just for self, but that it was a part of a greater mission in life."<sup>306</sup> After more than twenty-five years of working at the university, Gibbs credits the Institute for contributing to "keeping this spirit alive."<sup>307</sup>

Beyond the testimonials of the students regarding the effects of the IRM, university officials observed and commented on positive contributions of the program. Historian Leonard Arrington asserts that the president of Washington State University located in Pullman, Washington (less than ten miles from Moscow, Idaho), Ernest O. Holland visited the Institute on several occasions. According to Arrington, President Holland "told various gatherings of educators that the Mormon Institute had come nearer to a solution of the problem of religious education for college students than had any other with which he was acquainted."<sup>308</sup>

From the perspective of Dr. C. W. Chenoweth, the professor of philosophy at the U of I mentioned above who advised Sessions and acted as his mentor, the Latter-day

---

<sup>305</sup> Rafe Gibbs, "Tribute to the L.D.S. Institute at the University of Idaho," (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, n. d.), 1.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Arrington, "Founding the L.D.S. Institutes of Religion," 143.

Saints “were doing the best job he had ever seen . . .”<sup>309</sup> According to researcher Casey Paul Griffiths, when Sessions was transferred in the spring of 1929 to Pocatello, Chenoweth wrote a letter to the Church Commissioner of Education asking for Sessions to remain in Moscow.<sup>310</sup>

At the end of the spring semester of 1929, before the Sessions family left Moscow to a new Institute assignment in Pocatello, there was a farewell party given to honor them. Approximately 500 people attended the party, including the president of the university, the mayor of Moscow, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, and most of the prominent citizens of Moscow. What had started with doubts, fear, and rumors, ended with sincere thankfulness for their contributions to the town, the university, the local Latter-day Saint Church, and to the students who attended the Institute of Religion. J. Wyley gave this self-assessment: “So we felt that the four years was well-spent and it is a great satisfaction to us now to know that the Institute that was established with Moscow was the leading, or was the first one.”<sup>311</sup> Sessions attributed the success of the

---

<sup>309</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 8.

<sup>310</sup> Griffiths, "First Institute Teacher," 183.

<sup>311</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 5. It is significant that Sessions comments about the institute in Moscow being the "first one." A Robert A. Cloward, a former Institute Director at the Cedar City Institute near the campus of Southern Utah University and now deceased, presented a paper entitled "The Cedar City, Utah Origin of the Institute of Religion Program" at the Thirty Sixth Annual Conference of the Mormon History Association held on May 18, 2001. In his unpublished paper Cloward presented his historical evidence that the Cedar City Institute should be given credit for the first institute. The paper presents some interesting arguments dealing with Andrew M. Anderson who taught seminary to high school students as well as teaching a class in "New Testament Ethics" to a group of college students who were studying at what was called the Branch Agricultural College. The local newspaper called it "the first college Seminary class in the church school system . . ." While it is true that in 1925 Anderson did teach seminary to some college students, it was not officially recognized by the LDS Church as an "Institute of Religion." The name "institute" had not been adopted until April 17, 1928. I agree with what Church Education System Institute Director A. Gary Anderson concluded about which was the first institute: "The first institute called as such and organized with a full-time employee was the institute at Moscow, Idaho, in 1926." See A. Gary Anderson, "A Historical Survey of the Full-Time Institutes of Religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1926-1966" (Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1968).

program in a large part as the “cooperation was sincere on the part of both the University and the Church. An honest effort was made to provide a high grade program of religion, on college level, at a tax supported institution.”<sup>312</sup>

Another source that acknowledged the value of the IRM comes from President M. G. Neale, the president of the U of I who succeeded Frederick J. Kelley in 1930. President Neale was very supportive in his comments about the effectiveness of the Institute and the cordial relationship between the university and the Institute. He summarized his assessment of the Institute in these words: “This splendid building on the campus of the University is maintained as a dormitory, recreational and religious center for the L.D.S. students of the University. Its classrooms, library, and other facilities for religious instruction make it a very distinct addition to the religious and recreational life of the University.”<sup>313</sup>

In assessing the success of the first Institute, there is strong evidence to conclude that it affected the LDS students at the U of I in a positive way. Its “home away from home” environment, its courses in religion, its social activities, and the opportunities for worship services, all contributed in a positive way to the university educational experience of the students. President Heber J. Grant was very pleased with the results of the first Institute. He shared his feelings in general conference with all the members of the Church. He said, “We rejoice in the erection during the past year of an institute at Moscow, Idaho, where the young Latter-day Saints who are attending the University of

---

<sup>312</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "The Latter-day Saint Institutes," *Improvement Era*, July 1935, 414.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.

Idaho can receive education religiously.”<sup>314</sup> J. Wyley and Magdalen Sessions helped in a large measure in assisting students reach the Church’s objective for the IRM, to “enable our young people attending the colleges to make the necessary adjustments between the things they have been taught in the Church and the things they are learning in the university, to enable them to become firmly settled in their faith as members of the Church.”<sup>315</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have investigated the central historical question of my study, how did the IRM get started? I have narrated, documented, and analyzed the actions taken by key individuals: William C. Geddes, a concerned father who wanted a better local church environment for his daughters; J. Wyley Sessions, a former mission president who was sent to Moscow, Idaho, to study what could be done for university students to provide a religious education program for them; he eventually spearheads the construction of a religious student center and creates the curriculum for them; Professor George L. Luke who, along with Professor William J. Wilde, worked to have an LDS religious center built that would “blend with the architecture of the university;” Horace C. Cummings, Adam S. Bennion and Joseph F. Merrill, the Commissioners of Education for the Latter-day Saint Church during this period—men who provided guidance and leadership in laying the foundation for establishing the IRM; of the three Commissioners, the one who had the strongest direct connection with the establishment of the first Institute was Joseph F. Merrill who served as the architect of the program in articulating the objective of the

---

<sup>314</sup> Grant, "Funding Church Education."

<sup>315</sup> Merrill, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928," 1.

program and suggesting ideas for curriculum and instruction. Additionally, I have documented the support for education provided by the sponsoring institution for the IRM, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In concluding this chapter, it is imperative to comment upon the three concepts that I introduced in Chapter One that form the theoretical framework for analyzing the events, actions, and results in the establishment of the first Institute of Religion. I find it very significant that as soon as Charles W. Nibley issued the purpose of J. Wyley's charge in going to the U of I "to take care of our boys and girls that are up there and to see what the Church ought to do for our college students who are attending state universities," that Sessions immediately thought, "They were losing too many of the students at the University of Idaho, and there's a big long situation here." Sessions' phrase, "losing" the students is a very revealing phrase; it implies that the students possessed something, a religious faith and a connection with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and somehow in their university experience the students were "losing" that faith and their church connection.

Another possible implication of the phrase "losing" is that the students were being lost to something else in the university experience; although Sessions does not specify what that something else is, the inference can be made that the U of I, like most American research-oriented universities in the 1920s, was teaching modernism, science, particularly evolution, and "religion of science," Julie A. Reuben's term.<sup>316</sup> In essence,

---

<sup>316</sup> Julie A Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 167. Reuben uses the example of David Starr Jordan at Stanford University to illustrate what is meant by the term "religion of science."



Sessions was realizing that some of the Latter-day Saint students were being lost to secularization. Commissioner Joseph F. Merrill, whose academic background was in science, recognized what was happening to the students at the U of I. His observation was that when young people go to college and there study science and philosophy, “they are inclined to become materialistic, to forget God, and to believe that the knowledge of man is all-sufficient.”<sup>317</sup> Merrill felt that the objective of the Institute program was to reconcile science and religion. In his training as a scientist, Merrill believed that religious truths and scientific truths were not in conflict, and that they could be reconciled. That could be accomplished in the Institute in order to “hold them in the Church, make them active, intelligent, sincere Latter-day Saints.”<sup>318</sup> Rather than “losing” the university students, their faith could be strengthened and they would remain orthodox in their religious belief. Maintaining their connection with the Church and keeping their religious faith was equivalent to remaining orthodox. To use Merrill’s language, the objective was “to hold them in the Church.”<sup>319</sup>

Along with the process of reconciling science and religion and maintaining their religious faith was the avoidance of being swept away into worldliness. Was that a realistic threat in Moscow, Idaho? While Moscow was no “Babylon,” yet there were worldly influences that were operating at the U of I. Because of the existence of fraternities and sororities on campus it could be assumed that these societies were exercising some degree of worldly influence on students. Paula Fass documents the

---

Jordan believed "that science, particularly evolution, would provide standards for correct behavior. Then moral training could be based on science rather than on religious education." p. 169.

<sup>317</sup> Merrill, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928," 1.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

activities of the fraternities and sororities on the campuses of American universities in the 1920s.<sup>320</sup> While the U of I was not involved in all the extra-curricular activities documented by Fass, there were some activities that would be considered worldly.

While doing research at the U of I, I searched the records of the “Discipline Committee” for one decade, from 1925-1935. Some of the offenses tried by the faculty Discipline Committee included: going on a “sneak date” from 1:30 to 3: a.m.; intoxicated in public; petty theft and shop lifting; bringing a girl into a male’s boarding room and drinking intoxicating liquor; disorderly conduct at the Junior Cabaret because of being under the influence of liquor; illegal use of an automobile for joy riding; intoxicating liquor introduced and consumed in one or more fraternity houses on campus; giving liquor to university girls; academic cheating; possession of stolen automobile equipment; contributing to the delinquency of minors through liquor; drinking intoxicating beverages; etc. Most of the charges involved liquor and its consumption. Certainly the Latter-day Saint Church, which abstains from any alcoholic beverages, would want their university students to not be influenced by some of these worldly practices.

After analyzing the documents and data relative to the founding of the first Institute, I conclude that the spiritual and intellectual architect of the first Institute, Commissioner Joseph F. Merrill, was directly concerned about secularization and set as one of the main objectives of the Institute program the reconciliation of science and religion. He was also concerned about “keeping” the Latter-day Saint university students

---

<sup>320</sup> Fass, *American Youth in the 1920's*. In Chapter 4, "Work and Play in the Peer Society," Fass argues that "Participation in extra-curricular activities was the critical demonstration of peer group affiliation." p. 182. In this chapter she outlines the types of extra-curricular activities in which university students participated. In summary, the activities "gave to the American campus in the twenties its aura of frivolity and indulgence." p. 192.

within the faith, which I am interpreting as maintaining their orthodoxy. Additionally, the Institute was designed to provide positive social activities so that the young people could avoid the worldly extra-curricular activities associated with college life in the 1920s and 1930s. In the next chapter, I propose to trace the establishment and evolution of the next four institutes in Utah, Idaho, and California.

## **Chapter 4: A Brief History of the Establishment of the Next Four Institutes of Religion, 1928-1935**

“The establishment of the Latter-day Saint Institute at the Southern Branch has proven of great value, not only to Latter-day Saint students, but to the entire campus. While the religious instruction offered has been largely confined to members of the Latter-day Saint Church, other students, faculty members and townspeople have made constant use of the social and recreational features of the building.”

--John R. Dyer, Executive Dean of the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho, Pocatello, Idaho, 1934.

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will narrate, document, and analyze the establishment of the next four Institutes of Religion between the years of 1928 and 1935. My main purpose in this chapter is to show how each of the subsequent Institutes was established. Because of the individual nature of each Institute—the number of Latter-day Saint students, the location, the type of university involved—each founding story is different. For example, the process for establishing an Institute in Logan, Utah, with the majority of students who were Latter-day Saints associated with a university friendly toward the Church followed a completely different path than the process followed in establishing the Institute in Los Angeles, California, where Latter-day Saints were a small group of students. A secondary purpose is to demonstrate that the IRM was evolving by showing the changes that were being made in each subsequent Institute as lessons were being learned and the leaders were gaining experience. For example, J. Wyley Sessions, who had established the first Institute at the University of Idaho went to the southern part of the state and established the third Institute in Pocatello. He had learned how to work with the administration of the university to get approval of Institute’s courses and to get recognition for the program. He had learned as well how to work with the college population to offer the right mixture

of theological teaching, spiritual training, and social activities. A third purpose is to illustrate how the curriculum was undergoing refinement. Before the standardization of the Institute curriculum, each Institute director was able to create, within reason, his own curriculum to customize it for the students in the program as well as adapting the courses to the intellectual environment of the university. Lowell Bennion at the University of Utah created a much different curriculum than Thomas Romney created at Utah Agricultural College.

### **The Second Institute: The Institute of Religion at the Utah Agricultural College in Logan, Utah**

While J. Wyley and Magdalen Sessions were diligently working in Moscow, Idaho, to establish the first Institute, other areas of the country, especially near large populations of Latter-day Saints, began to ask for the Church to provide some type of religious education program for their local post-secondary students. According to Berrett's history of Church education, eight stake presidents (a stake is a unit of local church organization with jurisdiction over a group of five or more wards, local ecclesiastical units that equate to a Protestant congregation or a Roman Catholic parish) near the Utah Agricultural College in Logan, Utah, wrote to the First Presidency requesting a seminary near the college.<sup>1</sup> This matter was discussed at the Church General Board of Education meeting on February 29, 1928. Concerning the establishment of a collegiate seminary near the Agricultural College, the Board discussed the issue of support and acceptance by the College Board of Trustees and the faculty. Would they

---

<sup>1</sup>William E. Berrett, in collaboration with Frank W. Hirschi, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988), 52.

grant credit for academic work at the collegiate seminary? The Church Board wanted to ensure that the college would support it. After receiving the college's assurance, at the next month's meeting of the Church Advisory Committee held on March 21, the members discussed the possible construction of college seminaries for both the Utah Agricultural College and the University of Utah. They concluded that construction should begin as soon as possible at both sites.

The Advisory Committee, besides deciding to commence the construction of the Institute building at the University of Utah as soon as possible, decided to select a qualified instructor for the proposed Salt Lake City Institute. The instructor they chose was Arthur L. Beeley of the sociology department.<sup>2</sup> However, the building at the University of Utah was put on hold after Commissioner Merrill received the objections of President George Thomas. Thomas had become president of the University of Utah in April 1922, succeeding John A. Widtsoe who resigned in April 1921 when he accepted the appointment as apostle in the LDS Church.<sup>3</sup> On April 24, 1928, Merrill reported that President Thomas objected to the Church's employing any University of Utah faculty member to teach at the Institute; furthermore, he would not agree to grant college credit for religious courses on the New and Old Testament. Thomas was striving to keep a strict separation of church and state and wanted to minimize the influence or perceived influence of the LDS Church in the affairs of the university.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph V. Chamberlin, *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850 to 1950*, ed. Harold W. Bentley (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1960), 369-70.

During the administration of President Joseph T. Kingsbury, there occurred the “crisis of 1915” when four professors in the spring of 1915 were not renominated to their faculty positions. In two of the cases, the reasons that Kingsbury gave for not nominating them were based on the president’s perception that one of the professors “had worked against the administration of the University . . . and had spoken very disrespectfully of the Chairman of the Board of Regents. . . .” The other professor had “spoken in a depreciatory way about the University before his classes and that he has also spoken in a very uncomplimentary way about the administration.”<sup>4</sup> The reason for dismissal given to the four English professors was that it was “for the good of the University,” and they were also informed that they would not be given the opportunity for a hearing.<sup>5</sup> Another action that caused concern was the appointment of Osborne J. P. Widtsoe to be the new chair of the English Department, replacing a twenty-three year veteran and outstanding scholar, Professor George M. Marshall. Widtsoe had been the principal and teacher of English at the Latter-day Saints’ High School; he did not have any college or university experience.<sup>6</sup> With the appointment of Widtsoe, who was a prominent member of the LDS Church, and the dismissal of the four other professors, the issues of LDS Church interference and academic freedom arose.

When President Kingsbury’s comments became public, the faculty raised a furor about his statements and his actions; they began to discuss the need to remove Kingsbury as president. It was apparent that he did not have the faculty’s support. Fourteen

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 330-31.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 328.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 329.

professors reacted by handing in their resignation on March 17. In April the American Association of University Professors was called in to investigate. In their final report, the investigating committee found that President Kingsbury had yielded to pressure from the Mormon Church in selecting new faculty members and “It was believed by some of the resigning professors that the President had more than once yielded to this pressure.”<sup>7</sup> In Joseph H. Jeppson’s dissertation on the secularization of the University of Utah, he summarized the final report:

In sum, the Committee found that the reasons given for dismissing the four professors were either without basis in fact or were not reasons sufficient for dismissing the four, as judged by standards of other colleges. They also found that academic freedom, as cherished elsewhere, was lacking at the University of Utah.<sup>8</sup>

The end result was President Kingsbury submitted his letter of resignation on January 20, 1916. Therefore in 1928, President Thomas wanted to avoid anything that would appear that he was cooperating with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For the time being, an Institute at the University of Utah would have to wait.

### **Logan, Utah: Its Origins and Characteristics in the 1920s**

After the Latter-day Saints arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, Brigham Young began an aggressive colonizing effort that he hoped one day would become the “Great Basin Kingdom,”<sup>9</sup> embodied in a mega-state with the name of “Deseret,” a word

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Horne Jeppson, "The Secularization of the Univeristy of Utah, to 1920" (Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1973), 197.

<sup>9</sup>Arrington argues that "The basic declared goal of Mormon leaders was the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth." See Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830-1900*, Studies in Economic History (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 38. He describes the Great Basin region as "the region between the Rocky Mountains on the east, the Colorado River on the south, the Sierra Nevada Mountainis to the west, and the watershed of the Columbia



taken from the Book of Mormon that means “honey bee.” In Mormon imagery the honey bee or beehive is used as a symbol of industry.<sup>10</sup> Brigham Young sent colonizing companies from Salt Lake to the surrounding valleys: Ogden in 1848, Provo in 1849, and later to Brigham City, Fillmore, Parowan, etc.

Some seventy miles north of Salt Lake City lies Cache Valley, so named by the early American trappers who used the valley as a place for “caching,” or storing, furs and other goods.<sup>11</sup> Brigham Young avoided sending settlers to Cache Valley because of the “stories of the killing frosts told by the fur traders and Captain Stansbury . . .”<sup>12</sup> In July 1856 Brigham Young sent Peter Maughan and a small group of men to investigate the potential of settling in Cache Valley. They reported back to Young that they had selected a location on the south end of the valley. President Young then gave Maughan and six other men the charge to settle there with their families. In late August they left Tooele for Cache Valley. When they arrived in the valley, Maughan’s wife, Mary Ann Weston Maughan, observed, “O What a beautiful valley.”<sup>13</sup> The settlers built their houses in “fort style,” in two rows facing each other. The settlement became known as Maughan’s Fort. Today, the original settlement has the name of Wellsville. After surviving a particularly difficult winter, the next two years produced rich harvests and overcame the stories of the severity of Cache Valley’s climate. The “Utah War” in 1857 halted Brigham Young’s

---

River to the north. Its boundaries included almost the whole of present-day Nevada, the western half of Utah, the southwestern corner of Wyoming, the southeastern corner of Idaho, a large area in southeastern Oregon, much of southern California, and a strip along the eastern border of California." p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), 190.

<sup>11</sup> H. Dean Garrett, "Cache Valley," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 163.

<sup>12</sup> Joel Edward Ricks, "The Settlement of Cache Valley," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 24(1956): 320.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

plans for further colonization; when the conflict was peacefully settled, and more Mormon immigrants continued to arrive in Salt Lake City, the need for more land was answered by the attraction of the rich farmland and cooler climates in Cache Valley. There was a rush to that area in 1859 and 1860.

Logan (along with four other new settlements) was settled in the spring of 1859 by Peter Maughan and approximately one hundred fifty families. They took the name Logan from the Logan River.<sup>14</sup> It continued to grow and eventually by 1870 the Homestead Act (passed in 1862) began to be applied to Cache Valley which ensured more growth. The railroad came in 1873 which continued to increase Logan's growth. In 1877 Brigham Young donated land to a board of trustees to establish a college in his name. The entire Cache Valley "developed into a stronghold of the Church."<sup>15</sup> In the same year Orson Pratt, under the direction of Brigham Young, dedicated a site in Logan (in the area referred to as "the east bench") for building a temple. Seven years later on May 17, 1884, President John Taylor dedicated the Logan Temple. Eventually Logan became the county seat and in 1888 it became the site for Utah's land grant college, Utah State Agricultural College, which was opened in the fall of 1890. Logan had become an important educational, economic, and religious center for northern Utah.

---

<sup>14</sup> Patricia L. Record, a librarian at the Logan Library, published an article in 2007 that traced the origin of the name Logan. The two main theories are that the name came from a trapper, Ephraim Logan, who was an early fur trapper in the northern Utah area; the other theory is that the name came from a Plains Indian chief by the name of Logan Fontenelle. When the Mormons were crossing the plains they asked permission to stay on the Indian lands near Council Bluff. There is where John P. Wright, a member of the Mormon company, met Logan Fontenelle. It was John P. Wright who named the river Logan. See Patricia L. Record, "The Trapper, the Indian, and the Naming of Logan," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2007): 364-71.

<sup>15</sup> Garrett, "Cache Valley," 163.

The positive relationship between Utah Agricultural College and the proposed Institute of Religion was no accident, and its success was potentially assured. First, the founding and colonizing of Logan had been carried out by the Latter-day Saints. They were definitely in the majority in the community and they supported education as well as their religious beliefs. Second, when the Board of Trustees for the new land grant college met during the spring and summer of 1890, they “adopted a motion to have daily Chapel exercises,” which was symbolic of recognizing the importance of religion and incorporating it into the college’s daily routine.<sup>16</sup> Dr. John A. Widtsoe served from 1907-1916 as the fourth president of the college. Widtsoe was an educator who was considered by his peers as “eminently prepared to direct the activities of the college,”<sup>17</sup> and was a devout Latter-day Saint. Eventually in 1921 Widtsoe would be chosen to serve as an apostle in The Church of Jesus Christ leadership hierarchy. The positive relationship between the college and the Church was enhanced during his presidency and set a tone of support and cooperation between the two entities. It was similar to the cooperative spirit that existed between President Edmund James of the University of Illinois and Reverend James C. Baker of the Wesley Foundation in Urbana, Illinois.

### **Establishing the Logan Institute**

With the Institute at the University of Utah on hold, the General Board of Education, meeting on June 22, 1928, received the report from Commissioner Merrill that the First Presidency had authorized fifty thousand dollars to build the Logan Institute of

---

<sup>16</sup> Joel Edward Ricks, *The Utah State Agricultural College: A History of Fifty Years, 1888-1938* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1938), 26.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

Religion. The Church selected Karl C. Schaub of Logan as the architect of the new building. The question that was left unresolved was who would be the teacher at the new Institute. Commissioner Merrill offered the position first to Sterling B. Talmage and then to W. W. Henderson. Each of them declined the offer. The Board discussed the matter once more and agreed that they wanted to have Henderson establish the Institute. To ensure that Henderson could be persuaded to accept the offer on this second try, Elder Stephen L. Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was authorized to interview him and, if necessary, to offer Henderson five hundred dollars above his pay at the Utah Agricultural College. At the time of the job offer, Henderson was a professor of zoology. When he was able to negotiate a year's leave of absence from his faculty position, Henderson accepted the one year contract with the Church Education System. He was assigned to start up religion classes for the fall of 1928.<sup>18</sup> His official title was "director" of the Logan Institute of Religion. The potential for success for this Institute was considerable. In an article written in 1935, J. Wyley Sessions observed: "The population of Logan, Utah, is composed largely of Mormon people and ninety per cent of the student body belong to the Church. . . . The Institute, therefore, has large enrollments in week-day classes."<sup>19</sup> In the case of the Logan Institute, the issue of combating secularization and worldliness was not the motivating factor in establishing the Institute; when the eight stake presidents in Logan requested a college seminary near the university, their motivation was to reinforce the religious education that the majority of the students at the university were receiving in their own homes. The motivation was one of maintaining the

---

<sup>18</sup> Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System*: 53.

<sup>19</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "The Latter-day Saint Institutes," *Improvement Era*, July 1935, 414.

faith in the Church and providing social and religious activities in a welcoming environment.

Henderson was no stranger to Church education, for earlier in his career he had served as president of Brigham Young College (established in 1876) in Logan.<sup>20</sup> His previous experience with Church education along with his connections with the college made him a suitable director for the new Institute. During the 1928-1929 academic year, Henderson established the framework for the new Institute, teaching the classes and coordinating with the college to ensure that the students would receive credit for their academic work in the Institute. On March 31, 1929, Easter Sunday, President Heber J. Grant dedicated the new Institute building. It was scheduled to be dedicated a week earlier, but because of a severe spring snow storm it was impossible for President Grant to make the trip from Salt Lake City into Logan.<sup>21</sup> When the building was dedicated, it consisted of a library, lounge, chapel, and classrooms. Unlike the Institute building at Moscow, this building had no dormitory for students.

In describing the location of the building on the Utah State Agricultural College campus (in 1934 the word "State" had been added to the college's title), Henderson writes: "The great rectangular square which constitutes the College grounds is indented at a very convenient corner by which the College had not acquired. The Church acquired a portion of this indentation, so that the Institute Building is brought right to the heart of

---

<sup>20</sup> A. Gary Anderson, "A Historical Survey of the Full-Time Institutes of Religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1926-1966" (Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1968), 118.

<sup>21</sup> John L. Fowles, "Brief Historical Sketch of the Logan L.D.S. Institute of Religion: Seventy-Five Years of Excellence in Education by Study and also by Faith," in *The Logan L.D.S. Institute of Religion: Fall Class Schedule, The Historical Edition* (Logan, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 1.

the Campus and is so conveniently located that students can exchange classes between this building and any portion of the Campus . . .”<sup>22</sup>

During his service as Director of the Logan Institute, Dr. Henderson set out to accomplish three primary goals. First, he wanted to offer week day classes that fit both the schedule of the university students and fulfill their spiritual and intellectual needs. Henderson believed that when given the opportunity most university students would benefit from examining their religious beliefs from the perspective with what he called “the instruments of collegiate procedure.”<sup>23</sup> By “the instruments of collegiate procedure,” Henderson went on to clarify that phrase with two other references to intellectual methodology: first, he referred to “follow religious thought on a plane and to an extent comparable with academic procedure in the American College.” The “academic procedure” here refers to the procedures in science and logic that requires a reasoned and systematic approach to a subject. As a zoologist by academic preparation, Henderson was using language from a scientific perspective. The second reference is to the “ability of religion to stand the collegiate test,” which I am interpreting as the test of logic and reason. The benefit that the students would derive from this examination of religious thought would be to become “more usefully active in the cause of religion than before.” Henderson speculates that the students who would not have this religious education opportunity would doubt the ability of religion to stand the collegiate test and would fall “into a fatalistic mood of religious inactivity.”<sup>24</sup> For Henderson, who as a trained

---

<sup>22</sup> W. W. Henderson, "Church Schools and Seminaries: The Logan L.D.S. Institute," *Improvement Era*, January 1934, 40.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

scientist, felt that religion and science were compatible; he believed that college students who would seriously examine religion would come away with the same conclusion that he had reached and would see the harmony and compatibility of the two.

The second goal Henderson had for the Institute was to offer students the opportunity to worship and continue their religious education through a Sunday School program. The Logan Institute building had a chapel that seated 350 and two large classrooms for Sunday School classes. The final goal was to offer social opportunities to the students. The Institute building was designed with a reception room and a large social hall for a variety of social activities.

During its first year, W. W. Henderson created two classes, “Bible Literature” and “Moral Philosophy” for approximately 114 students.<sup>25</sup> In addition to the weekday classes he taught, Henderson came up with the idea of forming “reading circles” for students who could not attend the regularly scheduled classes. For Sunday worship, Henderson created an Institute Sunday School class for “all students, regardless of religious affiliation.”<sup>26</sup> For the social aspects of the Institute program, he started a student organization called “The Friars.”<sup>27</sup> Two years later the name was changed to “Delta Phi” Fraternity. Henderson returned to the zoology department after his year of service with the Institute. Nevertheless, he continued his association with it by teaching a class in the Institute Sunday School after his return to his college faculty position.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Aaron Shill, "History Written on Walls at Logan Institute of Religion," *Mormon Times*, March 5, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Fowles, "Brief Historical Sketch of the Logan L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Anderson, "Historical Survey of Institutes," 119.

Thomas Cottom Romney was appointed the second director of the Logan Institute at the completion of Henderson's one year contract. Romney came to his new position in 1929 with extensive educational experience, coming directly from Brigham Young University, where he was an assistant professor of history and taught from 1922 to 1929. Before that, Romney had taught English at the Juarez Academy in Mexico from 1914 to 1919 and had served as principal of the Knight Academy in Canada from 1919 to 1922.<sup>29</sup> As director of the Logan Institute for the next seven years, from 1929-1936, and its only teacher, he personally taught all the courses offered at the Institute, as well as administered the functions of director. Under Romney's direction, the Logan Institute underwent tremendous growth, increasing the number of students who were participating in the Institute program. In his first year at the Logan Institute, he more than doubled the original number of student enrolled from 114 to 250. By 1936 the number of students continued to increase until there were 529 students enrolled.<sup>30</sup>

Romney expanded the curriculum of the Institute program as well. Henderson had initiated the curriculum with two courses, "Bible Literature" and "Moral Philosophy." Romney began immediately to add courses to the curriculum until by 1940 the number of non-sectarian courses accepted for college credit had expanded to twelve. The titles of these twelve courses reflect the expansion and enrichment of the curriculum that had taken place from the Logan Institute's establishment in 1928:

- 11 Social and Religious Teachings of Jesus
- 12 Religion and Literature of the Apostolic Age
- 20 Parables of Jesus

---

<sup>29</sup> "Institute Head Retires," *The Deseret News*, Saturday, May 8, 1943.

<sup>30</sup> ———, "Historical Survey of Institutes," 129.



|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 25  | Life of Paul   |
| 50  | Building a Philosophy of Life                        |
| 70  | Religions of America                                 |
| 101 | Formation of the New Testament                       |
| 108 | World Religions (a three-quarter course)             |
| 111 | Religion and Literature of the Old Testament         |
| 112 | Prophets and Modern Social Problems                  |
| 113 | World Religions (a one-quarter course)               |
| 130 | Mystery Religions in the Ancient World <sup>31</sup> |

This expanded curriculum offered students not only insights into the Old and New Testament, but they could study comparative religions from an American perspective or a world perspective as well.

It was under Romney's direction that the first class in the history of the L.D.S. Institutes, collegiate rank, was graduated. In September 1934 the Church General Board of Education approved awarding graduation certificates for Institute students who completed an approved course of study. The board decided to require the completion of eighteen quarter hours or its equivalent, including two required courses: "The History and Doctrine of the Church" and "Comparative Religions." The Institute director would have to approve the other courses for graduation.<sup>32</sup> The Logan Institute graduation ceremony was held May 26, 1935, with President Heber J. Grant present to speak and to confer the diplomas. Franklin L. West, Assistant Commissioner of Education of the Church, was present at the ceremony as well.<sup>33</sup> A total of twenty-one students were awarded diplomas for their completion of the required number of credits.

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>32</sup> Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System*: 54-55.

<sup>33</sup> Sessions, "The Latter-day Saints Institutes," 414.

Berrett records that while Romney was the Institute director, he wrote to the Board of Education for permission to offer a course in “Higher Criticism of the Bible” during the winter quarter; the board decided that it was “unwise” to offer a course with this title and advised him to stay within the parameters of a curriculum of presenting the history of the Bible and to not delve into the area of higher criticism.<sup>34</sup> In 1911 at Brigham Young University the issue of “higher criticism” (along with Darwin’s theory of organic evolution) had caused such a controversy that it eventually ended in the dismissal and resignation of four professors.<sup>35</sup> The “higher criticism” part of the controversy stemmed from the teachings of Ralph Chamberlin, a Ph.D. in biology from Cornell, who insisted on “studying the Hebrew records without reading modern ideas into them.”<sup>36</sup> In an article about William Rainey Harper, the president of the University of Chicago, Michael Lee explains the meaning of “higher criticism.” “According to Harper, lower criticism was devoted to the study of original texts and versions, and higher criticism examined literary forms, styles, and models.”<sup>37</sup> What Chamberlin advocated at BYU was “that the study of the Bible must be governed by the same canons of historical proof and evidence that are basic in historical research generally.”<sup>38</sup> Chamberlin’s use of “higher criticism” in interpreting scripture was not his undoing, although the Church leaders

---

<sup>34</sup> Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System*: 53.

<sup>35</sup> Richard Sherlock, a Ph.D. from Harvard in Religion, presents a thorough examination of the controversy in his article. Sherlock summarizes the main issue in the controversy: "Ostensibly the source of the controversy was the teaching of evolution, but the crucial issue was . . . the broader question of scholarly endeavor and religious interpretation." See Richard Sherlock, "Campus in Crisis: B.Y.U., 1911," *Sunstone: Mormon Experience, Scholarship, Issues, & Art*, January-February 1979, 10-16.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Lee, "Higher Criticism and Higher Education at the University of Chicago: William Rainey Harper's Vision of Religion in the Research University," *History of Education Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2008): 520.

<sup>38</sup> Sherlock, "Campus in Crisis: B.Y.U., 1911," 16.

would have preferred a more literal interpretation of the Bible. He continued to teach organic evolution in his classes; he believed that evolution was “an aid to faith in God and belief in the resurrection,” nevertheless the conservative leaders of the Church felt that he was not in harmony with the “recognized doctrines of the Church.”<sup>39</sup> Chamberlin was dismissed. To avoid any issues of controversy as had happened at BYU two decades before, the Board of Education decided not to approve the course in higher criticism.

In 1936 a second instructor was added to the Institute staff, Dr. Milton R. Hunter, a Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Berkeley.<sup>40</sup> Dr. Romney would eventually serve fourteen years until he retired in 1943. At his retirement, the Institute enrollment had increased to 897 students. During Romney’s tenure as director of the Logan Institute, the largest enrollment was in the academic year of 1937-1938 when 1,378 students enrolled.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Third Institute: The Institute of Religion at the University of Idaho, Southern Branch in Pocatello, Idaho**

#### **Pocatello, Idaho: Its Origins and Characteristics in the 1920s**

The third Institute of Religion was established in Pocatello, Idaho, adjacent to the University of Idaho, Southern Branch (currently Idaho State University). To understand the establishment of the third Institute in Pocatello, it is necessary to explain something about the town, its origins and what it was like in the 1920s. Pocatello took its name from a prominent Shoshoni Chief, born in approximately 1815, who took over control of his

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>40</sup> Fowles, "Brief Historical Sketch of the Logan L.D.S. Institute of Religion," 1.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson, "Historical Survey of Institutes," 129.

band of northern Native Americans in about 1847. The natives referred to him as Tonaioza (“Buffalo Robe”) during his lifetime. In 1875 he converted to Mormonism and was baptized in Salt Lake City, Utah. Several members of the Shoshoni were also baptized Mormons. Pocatello passed away in October 1884.<sup>42</sup> In 1889 when the town was incorporated it took the name of Pocatello.

This explains the origins of the name; the land upon which Pocatello was established was originally land controlled by different bands of northern Idaho Native Americans. As these lands were taken over by white men in the reservation movement in that area of Idaho, the original size of the reservation for the Shoshoni was reduced again to three-fourths of its original size. Historian Carlos A. Schwantes asserts that the “best land” was opened to white settlement and taken over by whites.<sup>43</sup> This land was given the name Pocatello and eventually it became one of the population centers of Idaho. It grew because “the town would be the hub of an expanding network of railroads.”<sup>44</sup> By 1900 Pocatello had grown to 4,096 and had developed into the transportation hub envisioned in the 1890s; its citizens liked to refer to Pocatello as the “Gate City” because it had become Idaho’s “eastern portal to the Snake River Plain and indeed much of the Pacific

---

<sup>42</sup> Jay G. Burrup, "Pocatello (Shoshoni Chief)," in *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000), 929-30. See also Brigham D. Madsen, *Chief Pocatello, the "White Plume"* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, Bonneville Books, 1986).

<sup>43</sup> Carlos A. Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1991), 75.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

Northwest.”<sup>45</sup> Additionally, Pocatello, because of the railroad and its related activities, had become an industrial complex of railroad shops and yards.<sup>46</sup>

As was true of other railroad towns in the West, the railroad and its accompanying activities attracted a diverse group of people. According to author Robert L Wrigley, Jr., “As it had no formal government and hence no control over the actions of its citizens, Pocatello was a rough, ‘wide open’ town during the first years of its existence.”<sup>47</sup>

Pocatello did not follow the settlement pattern of the other early Idaho towns. The first non-Native American settlements in Idaho were the result of Latter-day Saints under the direction of Brigham Young. He sent a group of twenty-seven men to the “Salmon River Mission” in May 1855 to work with the Native Americans there.<sup>48</sup> They stayed there until March 1858 when they were called back to the Salt Lake area in response to the conflicts the Latter-day Saints were having in Utah with the federal authorities. In 1860 the first permanent non-Native American settlement was established in Franklin by Mormon settlers.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, Pocatello’s settlers “exhibited greater racial and ethnic diversity than was typical of Idaho communities and was largely non-Mormon in a Mormon-dominated region.”<sup>50</sup> Arthur C. Saunders summarized the religious landscape of Pocatello in his history of Bannock County published in 1915.<sup>51</sup> In 1888 the Congregational

---

<sup>45</sup> Jr. Wrigley, Robert L., "The Early History of Pocatello, Idaho," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1943): 353.

<sup>46</sup> Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*: 112.

<sup>47</sup> Wrigley, "The Early History of Pocatello, Idaho," 357.

<sup>48</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *History of Idaho*, 2 vols. (Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1994), Vol. 1, p. 166.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*: 113.

<sup>51</sup> Arthur C. Saunders, *The History of Bannock County Idaho* (Pocatello, Idaho: The Tribune Company, 1915), 132.

church organized its first church in town; the Episcopal Church was established the next year. Three other denominations followed: the Baptists, the Methodists, and the Presbyterians. The Roman Catholics had enough parishioners to construct two churches in town, one on the east side and the other on the opposite side of town. Nevertheless, while Pocatello had a large non-Mormon presence, according to Saunders, the Latter-day Saints were strong enough in numbers to establish two churches in town. They held their activities and religious services just as the Latter-day Saints were doing in Utah. They remained loyal to their church leaders and followed the directions coming from church headquarters. Although the Latter-day Saints were in the minority in Pocatello, strong Latter-day Saint wards were developed and it was upon this foundation that eventually the Institute of Religion would draw its students in establishing a viable religious educational program.

### **A Brief Overview of Education in Idaho**

In 1860 the Mormons in Franklin established the first non-Native American school in Idaho. It was taught in the teacher's home, but before long a one-room schoolhouse was constructed. The first public school was opened in Florence, Idaho, with six pupils in 1864.<sup>52</sup> That same year the second legislature, meeting in Lewiston, established the first public school system for the territory. The first high school was established in Boise in 1881; eight years later the University of Idaho was created in Moscow, but it did not open for students until October 1892. It was located in the panhandle of the territory rather than in the southern part of the state, which was more

---

<sup>52</sup> Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*: 138.

densely populated, “mainly to make a political statement: the new University of Idaho was intended as an olive branch to calm the panhandle’s many secession-minded residents.”<sup>53</sup> Eventually, the legislature would establish a second university in Pocatello, and a third in Boise.

Once the state university was created at Moscow, educational institutions continued to expand. In 1893 normal schools were established in Albion (Southern Idaho College of Education) and Lewiston (North Idaho College of Education). In 1901 the legislature founded a technical school, called the Academy of Idaho, at Pocatello, which opened for students in 1902. Nine years later the state opened a school for the deaf and blind at Gooding. The Academy of Idaho by 1915 evolved into the Idaho Technical Institute and in 1927 it became the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho. When J. Wyley Session was transferred to Pocatello, it was to establish an Institute of Religion adjacent to the campus of the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho.

### **Idaho in the Late 1920s**

Leonard J. Arrington refers to the decade of the 1920s in Idaho as “the faltering Twenties,”<sup>54</sup> and Carlos A. Schwantes refers to them as “the troubled Twenties.”<sup>55</sup> The gloom and doom were caused mainly by the difficult economic situation in which the Idaho residents found themselves, especially the farmers. Prior to and during the World War I years, Idaho supplied plenty of raw materials and labor to the Allied cause. Idaho did not develop any large-scale industries during the war, so when the war ended, and the

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>54</sup> Arrington, *History of Idaho*: Vol. 2, p. 19.

<sup>55</sup> Schwantes, *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*: 189.

demand for farm products, lumber, and minerals decreased, it caused great economic hardships for residents of the Gem state. Arrington summarizes Idaho's economic situation: "Like its western neighbors, Idaho experienced a depression that continued throughout the 1920s."<sup>56</sup>

Probably the hardest hit by the post war economic decline were the farmers. In 1921 farm prices began to fall; by 1922, the agricultural depression worsened. A small sample of prices tells the story: by 1922 the farmland values had declined to one-third of the pre-depression price. Potatoes, an Idaho staple product, declined from \$1.51 per bushel in 1919 to \$.31 in 1922. Wheat had a similar drop in price: in 1919 it brought the farmer \$2.05 per bushel, it dropped to \$.72 in 1921, and \$.90 in 1922. With these sharp declines in farm prices, many farmers had to default on their mortgages, thus causing the local banks to fail. In the early 1920s some twenty-seven banks, seven of which had national charters, closed. Lumber prices and mining suffered similar declines.<sup>57</sup>

While Idaho suffered an agricultural depression in the early part of the 1920s, other regions of the United States experienced what appeared to be a type of economic boom. This was especially true of the industrial East. According to Arrington, "Prices were strong, employment rose, stocks rebounded, and an air of confidence prevailed."<sup>58</sup> The situation in Idaho was not that positive; by 1929 there was only a mild recovery. Then with the stock market crash of October 1929, Arrington concludes, "Idaho, which had barely weathered depression conditions in the 1920s, was among the states most

---

<sup>56</sup> Arrington, *History of Idaho*: Vol. 2, p. 35.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 33-35.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p. 41.



adversely affected by the nationwide depression.”<sup>59</sup> This had a strong negative effect upon the college students throughout the state of Idaho. Many had to drop out of college and several had to find ways to economize in order to stay in school.

At the close of the decade, the president of the University of Idaho was M. G. Neale. As the fall semester opened in 1931, he wrote a personal letter to each student who had been enrolled the year before and failed to return to school in the fall. He inquired why they had not reenrolled; in every case it was the lack of financial resources. Laura Olsson of Wallace, Idaho, exemplifies what was happening economically in Idaho. She responded to President Neale’s letter: “The only reason that I did not register for this year is that because of the depression, my father is not in circumstances to send me to school. I have tried very hard during the summer to earn money, but have not been successful.”<sup>60</sup>

Paul Kehrer, a rancher from Jerome, Idaho, wrote this to President Neale:

The main reason or, I may say, the only reason I didn’t come to school is because I didn’t have the financial part. I work on my dad’s ranch and depend on him for finances. If he hasn’t got no money, I haven’t either. It is hard to make expenses this year at the price of farm products.<sup>61</sup>

Clifford Berkely, a student from Ahsahka, Idaho, had a similar situation. Rather than to go deeper into debt by returning to the university, he decided to earn some money: “I planned on coming back; but, since my financial status was none too high and I was a

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Laura Olsson, "Letter to Dr. M. G. Neale, President of the University of Idaho," in *UG (University Group) 12, E. Mervin G. Neale and Interim, 1930/1937* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho, 1931), 1.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Kehrer, "Letter to Dr. M. G. Neale, President of the University of Idaho," in *UG (University Group) 12, E. Mervin G. Neale and Interim, 1930/1937* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho, 1931), 1.

little in debt for previous schooling, I gladly accepted a teaching position offered me by Dist. #16 of Clearwater County.”<sup>62</sup>

### **The Pocatello Institute of Religion Is Established**

Despite the difficult economic times, Commissioner Merrill with the support of the Church Education Department carried out the plans to establish the third Institute of Religion in Pocatello. The official beginning of the Pocatello Institute occurred with the appointment of J. Wyley Sessions as the director for the academic year of 1929-1930. Before J. Wyley and Magdalen transferred to Pocatello from Moscow, Sidney B. Sperry was sent to Pocatello to begin the seminary program there in 1927-1928.<sup>63</sup> His teaching assignment was conducted primarily among the high school students, but during his two years in Pocatello he taught religion classes to half a dozen university students at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho as well. Sperry had earned his M.A. degree in Old Testament languages and literature from the Divinity School at the University of Chicago in 1926, and was thus well-prepared to teach classes in the Old and New Testament.<sup>64</sup> As the Church did not yet have a seminary building in Pocatello, the high school seminary students as well as the university students met in the Pocatello Sixth Ward building. Sperry taught the seminary classes for a two year period ending in 1929. When Commissioner Merrill appointed J. Wyley Sessions as the director of the Pocatello Institute, he decided to appoint Sperry to take Sessions’ place in Moscow. The reason for

---

<sup>62</sup> Clifford Berkely, "Letter to Dr. M. G. Neale, President of the University of Idaho," in *UG (University Group) 12, E. Mervin G. Neale and Interim. 1930/1937* (Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho, 1931), 1.

<sup>63</sup> Anderson, "Historical Survey of Institutes," 63.

<sup>64</sup> Russel B. Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 2 (1972): 6.

that decision was that Sperry was experienced and academically qualified to teach religion courses at the university level.

In a meeting of the Advisory Committee on January 8, 1929, Commissioner Merrill made a recommendation that an Institute near the University of Idaho, Southern Branch, be established. The advisory committee in their February 1929 meeting decided to approve Commissioner Merrill's recommendation and they appropriated \$25,000 to build an Institute in Pocatello. Early in spring of 1929 Commissioner Merrill informed the Sessions that they were going to be transferred to Pocatello. Once the Sessions received that notice, they started making preparations for the move south. In a letter addressed to Professor C. C. Vincent at the University of Idaho, Moscow, J. Wyley informed him that it was "necessary to leave Moscow early in June." The purpose for the move was "The church is building an Institute at Pocatello similar to the one we have here in Moscow. I have been asked to go there and help them work out the problems."<sup>65</sup> After three years in the Institute program, J. Wyley Sessions was the most experienced director in the entire program. He had established the first Institute; he had overseen the construction of the first Institute building; he had established the curriculum of the first Institute; he had learned several lessons about how to attract students to a religious education program and how to retain them; finally, he had learned what kind of educational and social environment was needed. All this knowledge and experience gained by J. Wyley Sessions were needed by the Church in creating an Institute in

---

<sup>65</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "Letter to Professor C. C. Vincent, April 10, 1929," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1929), 1.

Pocatello. The Sessions were planning to leave Moscow early in June after their two children finished school the last of May.<sup>66</sup>

When J. Wyley thought about his family's arrival in Moscow, he remembered how the residents monitored his every movement. Now as they were asked to leave for Pocatello, he wrote, "We are glad in many ways to go to Pocatello, but we are not glad to leave Moscow."<sup>67</sup> He describes their treatment: "The people have treated us with such kindness that I cannot fully understand how we deserved it."<sup>68</sup> He then details the five farewell parties that were held in their honor in Moscow, culminating with a reception held in the home of Professor Luke. The guests were the "who's who" of Moscow: President Kelley, six deans, the mayor, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, etc. were all in attendance to say goodbye to Sessions.<sup>69</sup>

The transfer of J. Wyley Sessions to Pocatello after only three academic years at Moscow was not received well by some individuals. An example of someone concerned about, or even angry, regarding the transfer was Professor George L. Luke, the same professor who had been working with the university to get its support for a Latter-day Saint student center. He was very pleased with the work of J. Wyley and his wife, Magdalen, in their interactions with the university students. Remember that his own daughter, Irene Luke, was one of the students enrolled in the program, making Luke's interest in the program more than just theoretical; it had personal implications for his own

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> ———, "Letter to Parents, Harvey and Alice Sessions, June 8, 1929," (1929), 2.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> ———, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," in *The Joint Oral History Project, Brigham Young University Alumni Association Emeritus Club* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Archives, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, 1982), 9.

family. When he received the news of the Sessions' transfer, he immediately wrote to Apostle Dr. Richard Lyman to express his displeasure with the transfer and to express his concern that the Church was making a mistake in carrying out this transfer. There were some rumors circulating that J. Wyley Sessions was being removed because of a lack of academic credentials; Sessions did not have a doctorate. In a follow-up letter on the same matter, this time addressed to Commissioner of Education, Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, Professor Luke expressed this opinion about the transfer: "I want to say very candidly that I am not yet convinced that the move is a wise one, although I am very glad to set my own feelings aside and cooperate to make it such if possible."<sup>70</sup> He had been informed by Dr. Merrill that the reason for the transfer had nothing to do with Sessions' academic training. Luke wrote, "We were glad to learn that the real reason for Brother Sessions transfer was not caused by his lack of schlorship [sic], but rather because of his exceptional ability to meet a difficult problem in Pocatello."<sup>71</sup> Luke closed his letter with a comment that he wanted to keep communication open in the future in case he wanted to make further comments about the situation of the Institute at the University of Idaho. He referred to the Institute as "our work here," clearly making reference to the combined efforts of the local people who worked to get the Institute started.

J. Wyley Sessions signed his "Memorandum of Agreement" (his teaching contract) on April 25, 1929, to teach at the Pocatello Institute. For his teaching services for that academic year, beginning on July 1, 1929, and ending on June 30, 1930, he was

---

<sup>70</sup> George L. Luke, "Letter to Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, June 3, 1929," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1929), 1.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

to be paid \$3,120. Considering the impending economic crisis that was soon to send the United States economy into the Great Depression, Sessions was pleased that he could provide for his wife and two children. As a condition for employment with the General Church Board of Education, each teacher was required to verify that he was “in harmony with the accepted doctrines” of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>72</sup> Maintaining religious orthodoxy was an important objective in the Church Education System. The other condition stated in the contract was that the teacher agreed “to be energetic in trying to develop and promote religious faith among his students to the end that they will live better and more righteous lives according to the standards of the above named Church.”<sup>73</sup>

With his signed contract in hand, J. Wyley and his family arrived in Pocatello, Idaho, some 560 miles to the southeast from Moscow. His primary task was to “complete the building under construction” and once it was completed to “set up and start an Institute Program.”<sup>74</sup> Sessions followed through with the completion of the construction of the Institute building, ensuring that the building was ready for fall semester classes that were starting in mid-September. The following month, several dignitaries came from

---

<sup>72</sup> The key "accepted doctrines" of the Church are these: first, the acceptance of the role of Joseph Smith as the prophet of the restoration of Christ's true church; second, accepting the Book of Mormon to be the word of God; third, the divine authority of God, called the priesthood, has been restored to the earth and that it resides today in the Church; fourth, that priesthood has been passed on to the current president and prophet of the Church; fifth, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the true and living church on the earth today.

<sup>73</sup> "Memorandum of Agreement," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1929), 1.

<sup>74</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "Letter to Mr. Calvin D. McOmber, Jr., Associate Director, Institute of Religion, Pocatello, Idaho," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1965), 2.

Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, to be present for the formal dedication of the Institute building.

The dedication was held on Sunday evening, October 27, 1929. Dr. Joseph F. Merrill, the Church Commissioner of Education gave the principal address. Merrill traced the evolution of the Church's education system. He mentioned the establishment of the Seminary program in 1912, the religious education program for high school students. When that program produced such positive results, the question was asked, "Why not have them [seminaries] at the colleges?" The answer to that question was discussed and considered for three or four years; eventually it was answered affirmatively "when the Church authorities received from the President's office of your University at Moscow an invitation to establish in that city some kind of an institution to serve the religious needs of University students coming from Latter-day Saint homes."<sup>75</sup> Merrill explained that the name "Institute" was given to the collegiate seminary program. He delineated the main purpose of the Institute Program: "But as a means of helping their young people to a realization of these facts [summarized by Merrill: "The Latter-day Saints are firm believers in the harmony of all truth . . . Religious faith need not retreat from nor surrender in any of the fields of research or learning . . . Scholarship can never put God out of existence nor find a substitute for Him . . ."] and of continuing the beneficent

---

<sup>75</sup> Joseph F Merrill, "Department of Education: L.D.S. Institutes and Why," *Improvement Era*, December 1929, 135.

influence of religion during their college careers, institutions such as this are being established by the Church.”<sup>76</sup>

Merrill concluded his address by expressing the idea that all students would benefit from religious education. The LDS Church would be pleased if other churches would establish religious education programs for members of their denominations. He offered the use of the building to other churches when the building was not being used by the Institute program so that they could conduct classes in Bible study for a nominal rental fee. Dr. W. D. Vincent, the State of Idaho Commissioner of Education, was invited to give an address. The concluding speaker at the dedication was President Heber J. Grant who addressed the audience and offered a dedicatory prayer.

Sessions followed a similar pattern that he had used while in Moscow: “We had virtually the same problems to go through there [in Pocatello], but we finally got the faculty and the dean of the school, and then the Idaho Technical Institute, to accept the credit.”<sup>77</sup> After negotiating with the university, Sessions succeeded so that “the Faculty and the Board of this institution accepted the Institute, both for its courses of study for credit and its program on the campus.”<sup>78</sup> In a letter to his brother, S. E. Sessions in Los Angeles, California, J. Wyley wrote in November that “our Institute work is starting out quite satisfactorily.”<sup>79</sup> Because of this and the positive comments he was receiving from people about how beautiful the Institute building turned out, Sessions informed his

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>77</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 9.

<sup>78</sup> ———, "Letter to Mr. Calvin D. McOmer, Jr.," 2.

<sup>79</sup> ———, "Letter to S. E. Sessions, November 7, 1929," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1929), 1.



brother that “we are well and happy in our work here.”<sup>80</sup> A further reason for the happiness was at the dedication of the building, there was an unusual showing of unity and representation of every stake in Idaho except four that attended the dedication. Sessions wrote to his brother that “It has been years since so many stake presidents have met together as they met here. President Grant was very pleased. A good spirit prevailed and I am sure a lot of good was accomplished.”<sup>81</sup>

### **The Progress and Evolution of the Institute Program**

As the school year began that fall in 1929, Sessions reports that there were about 150 Latter-day Saint students at the university. Of that number, 64 were enrolled in the Institute. This would be approximately 43 percent of the Latter-day Saint students involved in the Institute. From that group of students, Sessions organized a Sunday School with student officers leading the program and teaching the classes. Of this group of students, Sessions wrote, “Things are moving forward very well indeed. Students are loyal and seem happy.”<sup>82</sup> A year later with some more opportunities to work with the students at Pocatello, he added these comments about the students who were enrolled with the Institute in the fall of 1930: “It is a real joy to associate with clean, ambitious young men and women. It seems to me that we have an unusually intelligent group this fall.”<sup>83</sup> Sessions had learned a valuable lesson as a director of university students that “If

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Sessions, "Letter to S. E. Sessions."

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>83</sup> ———, "Letter to Dr. Alwyn C. Sessions, September 21, 1930," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1930), 1.

we provide the right kind of leadership I find the students loyal and true. Their hearts are right and they desire to do the proper thing.”<sup>84</sup>

This comment from J. Wyley Sessions is very revealing; it shows that while he had been directing this innovative religious education program, he had been gaining valuable experience in discovering what kind of leadership was most effective with university students. It should also be kept in mind that he had served as a mission president for the Church for more than five years in South Africa and had learned a variety of leadership principles that could be transferred from a missionary context into a university environment. As Sessions was gaining his experiences in leadership, he seemed to gain more self-confidence and more confidence in the Institute program. He confessed to his brother, “I am more and more convinced that this type of institution [the LDS Institute] is the solution to the problem of religious education.”<sup>85</sup>

### **The Institute’s Curriculum: An Example of Progress**

To show how the curriculum had developed and had become more sophisticated, one needs only to look at the courses Sessions taught at Moscow and compare them to the course offerings at Pocatello. In the summer of 1928 while planning for the first courses to be offered at Moscow, Sessions had received four suggestions from Commissioner Merrill: first, a specific course entitled “The Ethics of the new Testament” based on Dean Milton Bennion of the University of Utah’s book; second, a course in comparative religion; third, a course in ecclesiastical history; finally, an outline course in the history

---

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Letter to S. E. Sessions," 1.

and doctrines of the Church. Sessions received these suggestions from the commissioner, but he seemed most receptive to teaching the course on “The Ethics of the New Testament” and a course on comparative religion. I have not found any physical evidence that he taught those two classes, but from his comments to Commissioner Merrill, I feel safe in inferring that he probably taught those two courses. I have found specific evidence (registration cards) that Sessions taught a course on the “History of New Testament.” From the archival evidence and from the comments from J. Wyley Sessions, one could make the case that the course offerings at the Moscow Institute were probably these three: “The Ethics of the New Testament,” “The History of New Testament,” and some type of course on comparative religion.

By contrast, the course offerings at the Pocatello Institute are listed in printed form: “Courses Offered First Semester 1932-1933.”<sup>86</sup> The courses are listed in two categories: “Division I,” courses that are approved for credit at the University of Idaho, and “Division II,” courses that do not transfer credit to the University of Idaho. There are three courses listed in “Division I”: Religious Education 51, “An Introduction to the History and Literature of the Old Testament,” Religious Education 55, “Prophecy and the Prophets,” and Religious Education 75, “The Story of the New Testament.” In the second Division there are two courses listed: Religious Education 1, “Problems in Modern Religious Thinking,” and Religious Education 3, “Church Practice and Religious Leadership.”

---

<sup>86</sup> ———, “The Pocatello L.D.S. Institute Affiliated with the University of Idaho, Southern Branch,” in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1932), 1.

There are some apparent differences between the course offerings of the two Institutes. First, at Pocatello the Institute is now publishing a listing of the courses in a brochure format along with “Important Notices” which gives details about “Registration,” “Time Schedule,” “Credits and Grades,” “Tuition and Fees,” “Sunday School,” “Vesper Services,” and “Social Events.” Not only the publishing of the information is a change, but the complete program of academic, religious, and social aspects of the Institute were more fully developed at the Pocatello Institute. Second, the course descriptions showed a more sophisticated and more academic approach in the way they were to be studied. For example, “Prophecy and the Prophets” proposed to cover “A more detailed course [than “An Introduction to the History and Literature of the Old Testament”] dealing with the individual prophets and showing their historical background, their methods of appeal, and their place in the religion of Israel and of Christianity.” This was more than just different content, but a difference in depth and breadth in approach. Third, the listing of the courses with uniform numbers and titles shows that a standard system naming and numbering courses had been developed. Finally, the course entitled “Problems in Modern Religious Thinking” gave this course description: “A course designed to indicate the trend and the problems of modern religious thinking. Students will be encouraged to discuss and, if possible, solve their own religious difficulties. Open to all students of the University.” This type of course showed responsiveness to students’ needs; it appeared to be open-ended and encouraged students to discuss religious issues in which they had interest or concern. It seems that the Institute program has evolved.

## **J. Wyley Sessions Expresses His Concerns**

Despite all these positive comments about joy, happiness, and enthusiasm, Sessions revealed in a few of his statements that there were some undercurrents that were troubling him. The strongest worry that J. Wyley Sessions had was the economic situation in which he found himself. In November 1929 he shared with his brother, S. E. Sessions, his concern about money: "I enjoy the work, but I do not know whether I can afford to stay in it much longer or not."<sup>87</sup> This was not the first hint that Sessions was dissatisfied with his economic situation. Even before receiving his calling to work with university students at the University of Idaho, Sessions entered the interview with President Grant with the mindset that he was going to be given a job with one of the Church-owned businesses. He was thinking, "It was understood, generally assumed that I would be given a job with the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company." Sessions had a pretty strong impression that the job with the sugar company was his. In fact, before his interview with the First Presidency, Sessions had visited a person who he identified only as the "Idaho Sugar Company man" who informed him that the new superintendent was selecting Sessions as his field representative. When Sessions heard that, he thought, "I was very pleased with the prospects of the job."<sup>88</sup>

On another occasion while directing the Moscow Institute, Sessions had an experience which revealed that he still had some curiosity about seeking other employment opportunities, especially an opportunity that had more pay. Prior to his

---

<sup>87</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Letter to S. E. Sessions," 1.

<sup>88</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 4.

service as a mission president, Sessions had worked as an agricultural agent in Idaho. While pursuing his agricultural career, he became involved with the Idaho Seed Growers Association. Eventually he was elected its president. Years later in Moscow, Sessions heard about a man in town who represented a seed company in Montana. According to Sessions, “[I] was just playing around a bit” and he visited the man with the seed company. When the man discovered Sessions’ past history with the Idaho Seed Growers Association, he told Sessions that he would write his company to see if they would hire him. The next thing Session knew, a man from the company visited Moscow and “offered me a job and wanted me to go on and take the management with a very good salary.”<sup>89</sup>

One of the assistant commissioners of Church Education, Rudgar Clawson, made a visit to Moscow at about this time. When Sessions tried to talk to Clawson about the seed company opportunity, Brother Clawson kept putting him off and kept avoiding the issue. Finally, as Clawson was boarding the train to leave Moscow, he told Sessions to go to his office and read one verse from the Doctrine and Covenants. Here is what he read: “Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God.” After reading the scripture, Sessions wrote this note to the Montana seed company: “Circumstances are such that it would be impossible for me to consider your kind offer.”<sup>90</sup>

This nagging concern about always being in a precarious economic situation continued to cause Sessions to have doubts about staying in the Church Education System. In 1929 when he shared with his brother his doubts about how much longer he

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

could afford to stay in the Institute program, he speculated about his potential to earn more money in some other endeavor: "I am sure that I could make more money if I went into other fields. There are some other opportunities just now, but I am not sure just what the future will bring."<sup>91</sup> He confessed to his brother that "we are so poor we can hardly get along." Compounding the situation were the expenses from an automobile accident: "Our expenses have been very heavy and then to add to our load I had an automobile accident a while ago which will cost a great deal of money, but fortunately no one was hurt."<sup>92</sup> With regards to their economic situation, one almost gets a feeling of helplessness from J. Wyley Sessions.

A final issue that Sessions was concerned about was the fact that he was feeling pressure to return to graduate school to complete his doctorate. When Joseph F. Merrill, one of the first Latter-day Saints to obtain the Ph.D.,<sup>93</sup> became the Commissioner of Education, he had as one of his primary goals to raise the academic bar for the teachers and directors in the Institute Program by requiring all of them at the major universities to have a doctor's degree. On June 6, 1928, Merrill first shared with Sessions the decision by the Advisory Committee that it was Church policy to require Institute teachers to have a doctorate. He wrote to Sessions, giving him specific instructions to take a leave of absence starting with the summer of 1929 to do graduate work for a Ph.D., probably with

---

<sup>91</sup> Sessions, "Letter to S. E. Sessions," 1.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Researcher Casey Paul Griffiths has done extensive research on the life and background of Joseph F. Merrill, including a Master's thesis. His conclusion about the issue of being the first Latter-day Saint to earn a Ph.D.: "In 1899, he received his doctorate from Johns Hopkins University, becoming one of the first native Utahns to obtain a Ph.D." Casey Paul Griffiths, "The Chicago Experiment: Finding the Voice and Charting the Course of Religious Education in the Church," *B.Y.U. Studies* 49, no. 4 (2010): 95.

the University of Chicago.<sup>94</sup> This was similar to the work done by other Institute men who became part of the “Chicago Experiment,” the sending of seminary and Institute teachers to the University of Chicago in the early 1930s to complete graduate degrees.<sup>95</sup> The fascinating fact is that Merrill wanted Sessions to get his doctorate starting with summer school of 1929; yet, it was the same Merrill who realized that he needed J. Wyley’s experience and expertise in solving the problems in getting the Pocatello Institute started. In this case, it appears that pragmatism won out over academic excellence. In the end, Sessions did spend the summer at Brigham Young University taking courses from Commissioner Merrill and some LDS Church leaders.

Nevertheless, Sessions still felt the pressure to comply with the Advisory Committee’s unanimous decision to require a doctor’s degree to teach in the Institute program. When Merrill wrote to Sessions in 1928, he informed him, “So I send you this announcement in order that you may plan to qualify yourself with the requisite degree of scholarship.”<sup>96</sup> Intentionally, or unintentionally, to add impact to his letter, Merrill informed Sessions that Sidney Sperry was taking a leave of absence starting in the summer of 1928 to complete his doctorate at the University of Chicago. With the idea of still needing to complete a doctorate and not being able to take a leave of absence in 1929 because he was asked to manage things in Pocatello, in February 1930 Sessions wrote letters to the University of California, Berkeley and to Columbia University, requesting information about their graduate programs. In both letters he expressed his desire to do

---

<sup>94</sup> Joseph F. Merrill, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, June 6, 1928," in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

<sup>95</sup> Griffiths, "The Chicago Experiment," 91-130.

<sup>96</sup> Merrill, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, June 6, 1928."



some additional work “in the field of Bible history and Bible literature.”<sup>97</sup> In the letter to Columbia, Sessions asked specifically about correspondence courses; it appears that he was willing to travel to California to pursue a doctorate, but he had some reservations about going across the country to New York. The issue of not having a doctorate would continue to be a concern of J. Wyley Sessions throughout his religious teaching career.

The final issue relative to the founding of the third Institute concerns the functionality of the building constructed in Pocatello. On March 25, 1930, President Grant wrote to Sessions asking for his “honest and candid” opinion about the Institute buildings, comparing the one in Moscow with the one in Pocatello. President Grant wanted to know which building had greater utility for the Church’s educational program. In his reply of March 27, Sessions emphasized the fact that President Grant asked for his honest and candid opinion which he gave.<sup>98</sup> He wrote that in his judgment, from the perspective of “convenience and utility,” there was no comparison that the “Moscow plant is far the best Institute which we have.” Sessions praised the Church architect, Brother Price, who designed the Moscow building. He believed that Price had given “careful attention to every detail, and . . . did a most efficient job.” In contrast, Sessions felt that the Pocatello building had “many architectural blunders.” From his point of view as the director of the Institute, the Pocatello building was “not convenient in its operation.” He candidly wrote President Grant that there was “no comparison between

---

<sup>97</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "Letter to the University of California, Berkley [sic]," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1930), 1. ———, "Letter to Columbia University," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1930), 1.

<sup>98</sup> ———, "Letter to President Heber J. Grant, March 27, 1930," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1930), 1.

the two architects in question.” The letter did not name the second architect in question, but Sessions argued that “the volunteer service offered you would be a positive injury to your Architectural Department.”<sup>99</sup>

### **Assessments on the Value of the Pocatello Institute**

J. Wyley Sessions remained in Pocatello as director of the Institute from the summer of 1929 until the ending of the spring semester in 1934. While J. Wyley was busily establishing the Pocatello Institute, teaching the week day classes, and directing the Sunday worship services, his wife, Magdalen, became heavily involved in directing the seminary program in Pocatello. The original plan was to get approval for a “released time” high school religious education program, which would have allowed the LDS Church to teach classes near the high school during the regular school day as part of a student’s regular high school schedule. The Pocatello Board of Education rejected that plan, so Magdalen had to teach the high school seminary classes before school, during their lunch hour, and a session after school. J. Wyley expressed confidence in his wife’s teaching ability: “Magdalen is to be the teacher and I am sure she is a good one.”<sup>100</sup> Eventually she ended up with 90 high school students taking her seminary classes, working around their high school schedules in order to be able to take the religious classes. Sessions referred to his wife’s determination to make the seminary program work as working “against tremendous odds.” He felt her sacrifices were part of the “always to be pioneering” psychology that they had adopted in their religious education teaching.

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Sessions, "Letter to Dr. Alwyn C. Sessions," 1.

In summarizing what J. Wyley and his wife were able to do in establishing the third Institute in Pocatello, Idaho, Sessions praised the cooperation of Dean John R. Dyer, the executive dean of the school at Pocatello, and the cooperation of President Fred J. Kelly, president of the University of Idaho. The academic community in Pocatello reciprocated Sessions' praise by expressing their appreciation for the work being done by Sessions at the Institute. Dean Dyer was quoted by Sessions in a 1935 article written for the general members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in their official magazine, the *Improvement Era*:

The establishment of the Latter-day Saint Institute at the Southern Branch has proven of great value, not only to Latter-day Saint students, but to the entire campus. While the religious instruction offered has been largely confined to members of the Latter-day Saint Church, other students, faculty members and townspeople have made constant use of the social and recreational features of the building.<sup>101</sup>

The Dean of Women at the same institution, Marguerite P. Drew, expressed a similar sentiment when she wrote, “. . . those who are responsible for the social and recreational life of its students, may consider themselves to be fortunate in having on its campus such an Institute, where religious training can flower into gracious and fine living under the careful supervision of its directors.”<sup>102</sup> Praise for the Sessions' successful efforts came from within the Latter-day Saint community as well; John A. Widtsoe, who at the time was serving as the Mission President over the European Mission (with headquarters in

---

<sup>101</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "The Latter-day Saints Institutes," 415.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

Liverpool, England), wrote this to J. Wyley Sessions in 1930: "I was especially delighted to hear of the progress of the work in your charge at the Pocatello L. D. S. Institute."<sup>103</sup>

The J. Wyley Sessions era at the Pocatello Institute came to the close in the spring of 1934 when he received a phone call from John A. Widtsoe, the Church Commissioner of Education at the time. Widtsoe wanted the Sessions to come to Salt Lake City to discuss the Institute program. After some discussion about the Institutes at Moscow and Pocatello, Dr. Widtsoe looked Sessions in the eye and asked, "Brother Sessions, how would you like to go to Laramie, Wyoming?" Sessions was taken aback with surprise. He replied,

"Oh, dear. Oh, I wouldn't like to go, but if you say I should go, I'll go. You know my ability better than I do. And if there's where I can serve best, there's where I want to go. I don't care where it is. It doesn't make very much difference to me now. I've moved around enough to know, so that I'll go wherever you say."<sup>104</sup>

Dr. Widtsoe then showed J. Wyley a letter from President Crane, president of the University of Wyoming, requesting that Dr. Widtsoe send Sessions to open up the Institute there as he had done at Moscow. President Crane was a personal friend of President Kelly of the University of Idaho, and President Kelly told Crane to only have J. Wyley Sessions open an Institute in Laramie. The Sessions returned to Pocatello to pack up their belongings to move to Laramie, Wyoming, and there to open another Institute. This was another manifestation of the Sessions' willingness to do whatever his Church leaders needed him to do. The opening of the Laramie Institute will only be briefly

---

<sup>103</sup> John A. Widtsoe, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, October 11, 1930," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, 1930), 1.

<sup>104</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 9.

mentioned in this study because I will be focusing on the opening of the Los Angeles Institute, which offers a richer subject for this case study. What Sessions does at Laramie in many ways mirrors the process that Sessions had done in Moscow and Pocatello: overseeing the construction and completion of the Institute building, directing the dedication of the building, obtaining academic approval from the university for college credit for the nonsecular religious classes, teaching the week day classes in religion, coordinating the social events and programs, and supervising the Sunday worship services.

When the Sessions left the Pocatello Institute, Commissioner Widtsoe selected Daryl Chase to be J. Wyley's replacement. In the spring of 1930 Daryl Chase was one of three seminary teachers chosen by Commissioner Joseph F. Merrill to attend the University of Chicago Divinity School. He was one of the eleven men who were part of the "Chicago Experiment."<sup>105</sup> Chase, along with George S. Tanner (who later replaced Sidney B. Sperry at the Moscow Institute) and Russel B. Swensen (who taught religion and history at BYU), was granted a stipend of half salary for a year, loans from the Church to pay for his education, and an agreement to be rehired in the Church school system as long as he continued loyal to the Church.<sup>106</sup> Chase chose American Church history for his major and completed a dissertation on "The Early Shakers." He graduated in 1931 and then returned to Utah to teach high school seminary until he was invited to take the vacancy at the Pocatello Institute in 1934. Chase continued in the Church school

---

<sup>105</sup> Griffiths, "The Chicago Experiment," 91-92.

<sup>106</sup> Swensen, "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School," 40.

system until 1944; he left to become Dean of Students at Utah State University, where he later served as president from 1954-1968. Chase seemed to enjoy the university level teaching as compared to teaching high school students. His wife, Alice, wrote to Mrs. Sessions about how the Pocatello Institute was “surely an ideal set-up” as compared to the “worries and the ‘blue days’” the Sessions were having to experience in starting the new Institute in Laramie.<sup>107</sup>

## **The Fourth Institute: The Institute at the University of Utah (U of U), Salt Lake City, Utah**

### **Salt Lake City, Utah, in the 1920s and 1930s**

When Brigham Young and his followers entered the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, tradition has it that when Young saw the valley at the mouth of Emigration Canyon he said, “This is the right place, drive on.”<sup>108</sup> Historian Thomas Alexander argues that whether Young said those exact words or not, the phrase captured the feelings of many of those Latter-day Saints who were Young’s followers. They made Salt Lake City their home and the church headquarters. Salt Lake City was what one expert calls an “instant city” because “it was brought into existence suddenly and by design, and it grew in an area where no other settlement existed.”<sup>109</sup> The population of Salt Lake grew rapidly; in four months it had grown from approximately 147 to nearly 1,700 people. Within twenty

---

<sup>107</sup> Alice Chase, "Letter to Magdalen Sessions in Laramie, Wyoming," in *J. Wyley Sessions Papers* (Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library/L. Tom Perry Special Collections, ca. 1935), 1.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, *Utah, The Right Place: The Official Centennial History* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs-Smith, 1995), 96.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas G. Alexander, and James B. Allen, *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City*, vol. 5, The Western Urban History Series (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1984), 2.

years, it had reached 12,000 people. And with each decade its population increased as migrants from other regions of the United States and immigrants from Europe and Asia moved into the city. Many of them came for religious reasons, but others came for social, political, or even economic reasons.

As Salt Lake City entered the 1920s, it had experienced several reforms inspired by the progressive movement. These reforms tried to make city government more efficient as Salt Lake adopted the “commission” form of government with five commissioners who served as full-time administrators.<sup>110</sup> The progressives wanted a city government that was effective and orderly. The traditional Mormon and Non-Mormon conflicts seemed to subside in the twenties and a new spirit of cooperation emerged. In 1921 the Ku Klux Klan was organized in the city. For a while it seemed to gain some notoriety, but soon fell in disarray by the next year. Like most urban areas, the city faced the issue of child labor, union labor unrest, enforcement of prohibition, etc.

Salt Lake City entered the 1930s as a regional center and was the largest city in the Intermountain West. Nevertheless, depression had a devastating effect on the city. According to Alexander and Allen, “The depression hit harder in Utah than in the nation as a whole. National unemployment rose to twenty-five percent of the work force in the winter of 1932-1933, while Utah’s reached thirty-five percent.”<sup>111</sup> What was occurring nationally occurred in Salt Lake City: banks closed, many businesses failed, unemployed miners roamed the streets, and bread lines appeared in the city. There were tough times

---

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 199.

throughout the decade. Salt Lake City benefited in many ways from the New Deal legislation of the 1930s.

### **Establishing the Salt Lake City Institute of Religion**

Considering that the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since the late 1840s had been in Salt Lake City, one would assume that locating an Institute there would have been logical. Additionally, it was there that the Church had established the University of Deseret in 1850,<sup>112</sup> the direct ancestor institution of the U of U. It seems almost anachronistic to refer to the Salt Lake City Institute as the fourth one established. As the IRM was beginning, there were frequent discussions about providing some type of religious education entity for the U of U, but it never came to fruition until 1934. As noted in Chapter 3, the earliest discussions about locating an Institute in Salt Lake City started around 1912 in the General Board of Education; although Superintendent Cummings called for something to be done “soon,” no action was taken. Three years later, the same body discussed the request of U of U President Joseph T. Kingsbury that “some kind of building is erected by the Church, near the campus, and that a course of theological training be established for which they would be willing to give college credit.”<sup>113</sup> During that same year the “crisis of 1915,”<sup>114</sup> or the “great

---

<sup>112</sup> Chamberlin, *University of Utah*: 5.

<sup>113</sup> Horace H. Cummings, "Annual Report for 1915," in *Board of Education (General Church), Minutes 1888-1990*

(Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1915), 4.

<sup>114</sup> Chamberlin uses the term "crisis of 1915" to refer to the faculty relations with the president of the U of U for 1915. Chamberlin, *University of Utah*: 337.



debacle of 1915,”<sup>115</sup> occurred eventually forcing Kingsbury to hand in his letter of resignation on January 20, 1916.

From researcher Joseph Horne Jeppson’s perspective, the events of 1915 with the subsequent resignation of President Kingsbury was the turning point in the secularization of the U of U. According to Jeppson, it resulted in the U of U being “identified more with other American Colleges, and less with the Church and with the Salt Lake City ‘establishment’ (which includes the Mormon hierarchy).”<sup>116</sup> Considering the intellectual climate of the U of U after the “crisis of 1915” with its emphasis on academic freedom, and the appointment of a prominent Latter-day Saint educator, Dr. John A. Widtsoe, as its president, any plans for some type of collegiate seminary for the U of U were cautiously delayed. The Church’s financial situation was also a contributing factor to the delay.

It wasn’t until 1928 that the Advisory Committee revisited the issue of establishing an Institute at the U of U; at the meeting on March 21, they approved a plan to begin construction on an Institute building as soon as possible at the U of U. Commissioner Merrill visited with U of U president George Thomas. Merrill shared the Advisory Committee’s decision, which Thomas rejected, listing his objections to Merrill. He reported Thomas’s objections to the Advisory Committee which voted to delay the proposed Institute construction. On October 8, 1931, Commissioner Merrill was called to be an apostle in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, yet besides his other Church duties, he continued as the Commissioner of Education for two more years. In

---

<sup>115</sup> Jeppson prefers to call the events involving the faculty in 1915 as the "great debacle of 1915." Jeppson, "Secularization of the University of Utah," 159.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

1933 Merrill went to England to preside over the European Mission of the Church. His replacement as Commissioner was John A. Widtsoe, who had served previously in the same capacity from 1921-1924. According to William E. Berrett, the early 1930s, being a period of depression, the “expansion of the seminary and Institute program was seriously curtailed.”<sup>117</sup> The one exception was the Institute near the U of U.

### **Why the Salt Lake City Institute Was Established Even in Tough Economic Times**

The Salt Lake City Institute was probably spared because of the personal interest of Church leaders; they knew that an Institute in their own community would help their own families, directly or indirectly. The precedent had been set in the 1880s when the Church had established the Salt Lake City Academy. When it was established, historian D. Michael Quinn argues that “It soon became evident that church leaders intended Salt Lake City to become the center of higher education of the church and in Utah.”<sup>118</sup> The logic was that the city that was the headquarters of the Church should also be the headquarters for the Church’s university, if for no other reason than symbolically to have the two headquarters within the same city. For various economic and political reasons, the Salt Lake City Academy evolved into the LDS College and eventually into the Young University, but it lost out to its rival the University of Utah. But since the 1880s, Church leaders still had it in their plans to have a strong religious educational presence within their own city. It finally took the shape of an Institute of Religion at the University of Utah.

---

<sup>117</sup> Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System*: 54.

<sup>118</sup> D. Michael Quinn, "The Brief Career of Young University at Salt Lake City," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1973): 75-76.

## **The Selection of the First Director at the Salt Lake City Institute**

Commissioner Widtsoe selected Carl F. Eyring of Brigham Young University to teach a Sunday School class in association with the University Ward Sunday School. Widtsoe, having served as the president of the U of U, had first-hand knowledge of the strong feelings on the U of U campus about the presence of a Latter-day Saint religious education program. He advised the Board of Education to “not move too quickly” in establishing the Institute near the campus. He asked the Board for suggestions of an outstanding educator to direct the development of the Institute. On October 20, 1934, Commissioner Widtsoe, along with two other members of the Church General Board of Education, Joseph Fielding Smith, and Charles A. Callis (all three members of the Council of Twelve Apostles of the Church), met with Lowell L. Bennion at the Widtsoe home in Salt Lake City. They interviewed him and unanimously agreed that they had found the right person to be the future director of the Salt Lake Institute. They needed to work out some of the details with Bennion, but they felt good about their decision.

## **Lowell Bennion’s Background and Education**

Commissioner Widtsoe had known Lowell’s father, Milton Bennion, while serving as president of the U of U. Milton, the youngest of seven sons who was named for the famous author because his father wanted his last son “to be inspired to become a writer,”<sup>119</sup> fulfilled his father’s wish to get a good education. He obtained a B.S. degree in social science from the U of U in 1897 and then he spent a summer at the University of

---

<sup>119</sup> Mary Lythgoe Bradford, *Lowell L. Bennion: Teacher, Counselor, Humanitarian* (Salt Lake City, UT: Dialogue Foundation, 1995), 8.

Chicago studying philosophy and education with John Dewey. Immediately, he followed up with a master's degree at Columbia University in 1901. In September of that year he became assistant professor of pedagogy at the U of U, which was his academic home for the next forty years. In 1913 Milton Bennion was appointed dean of the School of Education, a position he held until he retired in 1941. His son, Lowell, one of ten children, was raised in an intellectually-stimulating environment with dinner guests from the U of U and from visiting scholars to Salt Lake City.

Lowell graduated from high school at fifteen, earned a secondary teaching certificate, and graduated from the U of U in 1928. He married his high school sweetheart, Merle Colton, on September 18, 1928, and after six weeks left for Europe for the next thirty-two months to serve in the Swiss-German Mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. While Lowell was serving his mission in Europe, John A. Widtsoe, who in 1931 was serving as the European Mission President, met him and his wife in Vienna. Bennion served as a Sunday School teacher in the small church unit (called a branch) in Vienna, and whenever Widtsoe visited the Vienna Branch, Lowell translated for him.

When Lowell was released as a missionary on April 9, 1931, his father suggested that he stay in Europe to get his Ph.D. His wife left for Europe and met Lowell in Paris on June 2, 1931. He began his graduate studies in political science at the University of Erlangen in Germany, but switched to sociology and social philosophy when he was introduced to the ideas of Max Weber. Upon reading and studying Weber, Bennion

described him as “the most creative, expansive mind I ever met.”<sup>120</sup> He eventually wrote his dissertation on Weber, “Max Weber’s Methodology,” and published it the same year he was awarded his Ph.D. at the University of Strasbourg (located just across the border in France) in 1933;<sup>121</sup> he had transferred there when the political climate at Erlangen became unsafe for Americans who were not embracing National Socialism. Upon being awarded his degree on December 11, 1933, he and Merle made preparations to return to Utah. They made one stop before leaving Europe—visiting the newly installed mission president in the Netherlands, T. Edgar Lyon and his wife, Hermana Forsberg Lyon, a friend of Merle. It was the first meeting between Lowell and T. Edgar; eventually, they would become close friends and teaching colleagues at the Institute in Salt Lake City.<sup>122</sup>

Lowell and Merle Bennion arrived in Utah in January 1934, finding the United States still struggling economically, and unemployment was a real issue even for someone with a Ph.D. in sociology. Lowell applied for teaching positions throughout the state of Utah without any success. He applied to be an “education advisor” with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), a new public works program created by Franklin D. Roosevelt. In March he was hired to teach those in the Corps “what they wanted or needed.”<sup>123</sup> The job took them to Salina in central Utah and then to Soapstone, located in the Uintah Mountains. His employment with the CCC ended in August. Meanwhile, Lowell had received job offers from the Branch Agricultural College in Cedar City and from Snow College in Ephraim. He accepted the job at Snow College to teach economics,

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 53-54.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 54.

German, and sociology. After accepting that offer, Commissioner Widtsoe requested the meeting with Lowell. In the initial stages of discussing possible employment with the Institute program, Widtsoe presented the idea of going to Moscow, Idaho, but Bennion expressed his reluctance to move there. Widtsoe then proposed the option of opening a new Institute at the U of U. Bennion realized that this would be a position that he would truly enjoy, but he had already committed to Snow College. Widtsoe offered to negotiate with Snow College to release Bennion from his agreement there; Widtsoe was successful in obtaining that release. With that obstacle eliminated, Lowell and Merle moved back to Salt Lake City to begin the task of opening up the Salt Lake Institute. Years later, Lowell Bennion summarized his career in these brief sentences: “My career divides naturally into three parts: the Sanctuary of the Institute, the Halls of Ivy—and the University of Utah—and the Real World of the Community Services Council.”<sup>124</sup> The decision to enter the Church’s Education System and to teach religion to university students “seemed exactly right” because for Lowell L. Bennion “the classroom had so long been the second home of the Bennions . . .”<sup>125</sup> He gladly entered the “Sanctuary of the Institute.”

### **Establishing the Salt Lake City Institute near the University of Utah: The First Year**

Two months later on December 4, 1934, the Church General Board of Education approved a list of activities for the Institute at the U of U. The approved activities are summarized in these six statements: 1.) providing a Sunday School class to deal with “topics of special interest to college students;” 2.) offering at least two university level

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

courses, one of which was to “deal with the subject of comparative religions.” 3.) teaching a university level seminar “for the discussion of gospel subjects;” 4.) holding “regular daily consultation hours” by the Institute director so that students may “discuss their questions and difficulties.” 5.) holding an “open evening” every Thursday for discussing “questions and difficulties informally,” listening to book reviews, and meeting General Authorities of the Church as well as other “prominent Church members who were interested in the Institute;” 6.) providing “some social activities to help unify Institute students.”<sup>126</sup> This list of activities fit right in with what Lowell Bennion wanted to do with students. In reflecting back on those early years of the Salt Lake Institute, Bennion wrote:

“I was glad that I was not an expert in theology, Church history, or archaeology. I became interested in students—their thinking, their intellectual, social, ethical, and spiritual needs. . . . The Institute afforded me the most complete relationship I have ever had with students. I taught, counseled, dined and danced, worshipped, and served with them—with thousands of them.”<sup>127</sup>

With the preparatory work completed in the fall of 1934, on January 2, 1935, the new Director of the Salt Lake Institute walked from his rented home to the University Ward Chapel to begin the first day of registration for classes at the U of U and the first day of registration for classes in the newly announced Institute. When Commissioner Widtsoe presented Lowell his teaching contract, he asked the commissioner, “Dr. Widtsoe, what should I teach?” Widtsoe answered his question with this query: “What do

---

<sup>126</sup> Berrett, *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System*: 54.

<sup>127</sup> Eugene England, ed. *The Best of Lowell L. Bennion: Selected Writings: 1928-1988* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1988), 50.

you think? What are you able to teach?”<sup>128</sup> That first quarter Bennion taught three classes: “Religion and the Rise of Our Modern Economic Order” (a class based on his dissertation and his interest in Max Weber), “Comparative Religions,” and “The Position of Mormonism in the Religious Thought of Western Civilization.” These three classes definitely reflected the interests and academic background of the Institute director.

Bennion commented about creating his own curriculum: “In the beginning, we had no established curriculum. I developed courses in a personal philosophy of life, leadership, world religions, courtship and marriage, marriage and family life, along with the traditional studies in scripture.”<sup>129</sup> He enjoyed the freedom of creating courses according to the needs and interests of his students and relating them to what they were studying on campus. He felt that creating his own curriculum and being allowed to use his creativity was “exciting.” By the end of the first day of registration he had sixty-five students enrolled; by the end of the second day, the number was more than double that, 140 students had registered. By the end of the week he had thirty-five graduate students enrolled in the “Position of Mormonism in the Religious Thought of Western Civilization.” And to Bennion’s pleasant surprise, the course based on his studies of Max Weber, “Religion and the Rise of Our Modern Economic System” had attracted thirty students. The first quarter of the Salt Lake Institute was off to a good start. Besides the week day classes, the open discussion groups, the fireside gatherings on Thursday evenings, the social activities, and the Sunday worship services all contributed to the

---

<sup>128</sup> Peggy Fletcher, "Saint for All Seasons. An Interview with Lowell L. Bennion," *Sunstone: Mormon Experience, Scholarship, Issues, & Art*, February 1985, 8.

<sup>129</sup> England, *The Best of Lowell L. Bennion*, 50.



success and progress of Institute during its first quarter. Commissioner Widtsoe, who resided in Salt Lake City, became personally involved with the success of the Institute. Bennion recalls, “Dr. Widtsoe was most gracious that first year. We had a fireside [usually an informal meeting with a selected speaker followed by discussion and refreshments] once a month in his home with students. He was very cordial, informal, and personable.”<sup>130</sup>

At the end of the first quarter Bennion paused to evaluate what had been accomplished in opening the Salt Lake Institute. Initially, he had overcome some major hurdles: first, the U of U did not give any official recognition to the Institute program. The students who enrolled in the classes were not receiving any university credit for their efforts; they enrolled in the classes and studied the materials because of their own personal motivation. Lowell’s father, Milton Bennion (dean of education) wrote him a note advising him about not seeking university credit for Institute courses: “Just now, Pres. Thomas is not opposed to religious education, but he does not want to stir up a Mormon versus Non-Mormon fight in the Board of Regents & Faculty by bringing up the question of credit for this work.”<sup>131</sup> Secondly, Bennion did not have permission to advertise on campus. This restriction caused him to look for creative ways to recruit students. Lowell was called as a Sunday School teacher in the University Ward, so he talked with the Sunday School superintendent (the person directing the Sunday School) about his restrictions in advertising the new Institute. The Sunday School superintendent

---

<sup>130</sup> Fletcher, "Interview with Lowell L. Bennion," 9.

<sup>131</sup> Bradford, *Lowell L. Bennion*: 64.

was also the dean of students at the U of U and he shared the list of students of out-of-town Mormons attending the university. Bennion made personal visits to more than 400 students in the dormitories.

During the second year the enrollment continued to climb. Part of the reason was that Lowell had received permission to advertise in *The Daily Chronicle*, the student newspaper on campus. Besides the programs and classes he had taught the preceding year, he added a class on “Mormon Doctrine, History, and Philosophy,” which he taught at his own home twice a week. The most significant innovation that Bennion added in the second year was the component of community service.<sup>132</sup> The students (always accompanied by their Institute director) performed service projects like painting a widow’s house, doing yard work for elderly couples, Christmas caroling to shut-ins, etc. This concept of service projects became a hallmark of Lowell Bennion’s application-oriented approach to living a Christian life, and he practiced what he preached.

### **The Second Year: Growth and Progress**

Enrollments soared the following year; the Salt Lake Institute saw a 50 percent increase in students.<sup>133</sup> The two most popular courses taught that year were “Mormonism: An Interpretation and a Way of Life” and “Religion and Modern Thought.” During his third year (the academic year of 1936-1937) Bennion added an innovation that was requested by a group of male students who wanted “more than classwork” to assist them to “be brothers.” He invited the men to his house where they spent Sunday afternoons for

---

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 72.

several weeks writing drafts of spiritual, intellectual, and social goals for a constitution for some type of social organization. They called themselves the “Alpha Chapter” but had “no name, no symbol, no slogan, and no authorization except Lowell’s.”<sup>134</sup> They wanted a type of social-spiritual organization, but distinguished from the Greek fraternities that had placed too much emphasis on social class, snobbery, and elitism. In October, twenty-six male students formed the “Alpha Chapter” and pledged themselves to accept willingly any male student who promised to “promote LDS ideals and purposes, to develop the Institute, to promote intellectuality, fellowship, leadership, and culture.”<sup>135</sup>

Not long after that, the women in the Institute asked Lowell, “Why can’t we have a sorority?” Lowell’s answer, “You can.” The women started the Omega Chapter and adapted the Alpha’s constitution to fit their needs. At a December 3 meeting held in the Bennion home the women adopted the new constitution. The two groups eventually decided to combine their organizations and call themselves Lambda Delta Sigma for the acronym LDS. The students decided on the five ideals of Lambda Delta Sigma: truth and light, eternal progress, revelation, (sacred) knowledge, and priesthood. The students, under the guidance of their director, had created a new organization that satisfied their social, intellectual, and spiritual needs. Bennion was proud of what the students had created: “Lambda Delta Sigma became a laboratory for a lot of things. Service projects,

---

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

leadership experience, real brotherhood and sisterhood. It was a marvelous thing to have these men and women chapters together in the same organization.”<sup>136</sup>

In July 1937, Church Education Commissioner Frank West invited Lowell Bennion to his office to discuss the future of the Salt Lake Institute. West surprised Bennion with an invitation to start a new Institute at the University of Arizona in Tucson. If Bennion would accept the new opportunity, it would mean a raise in salary. Bennion was hesitant at first, but when West assured him that he could resume the directorship of the Salt Lake Institute after two years, Lowell accepted the assignment. West wanted Bennion to establish in Tucson what he had so masterfully created in Salt Lake. T. Edgar Lyon, the just released mission president of the Netherlands Mission would take over Bennion’s place as director in Salt Lake.

### **T. Edgar Lyon’s Contribution to the Salt Lake City Institute**

T. Edgar Lyon arrived at the directorship of the Salt Lake Institute with years of experience and preparation that he would use to great advantage for the next two years. Lyon was born in Salt Lake City on August 9, 1903. He attended the Latter-day Saints University (LDSU, originally it was called the Salt Lake Academy and was founded in 1886) which consisted of a business school, a music education program and the “university” which was the high school. Lyon graduated in 1921 and then enrolled in the U of U. He completed two years of general education courses before serving a mission to the Netherlands from 1923-1926. After the mission he traveled for 99 days throughout

---

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

Europe and the Middle East, and then returned to Utah to get a degree in history from the U of U in June 1927. He married Laura Hermana Forsberg in August of the same year. After the honeymoon, they went to Idaho where Lyon began his teaching career as a high school teacher. In April 1928 Lyon was recruited by a strong stake president to leave the public schools and start teaching religion for the Church Education System. It was a decision that set the course for the rest of his professional career: “For the next forty-five years, with the exception of a three-and-a-half year return to the Netherlands, Lyon would be directly associated with Church education.”<sup>137</sup>

Before Lyon took over the reins as the director, he had three weeks of intense training and mentoring from Lowell L. Bennion. The two talked and planned the courses to be taught and the activities that needed to be held. They both realized that they were a compatible team. Lyon basically used the curriculum he inherited from Bennion. For the fall quarter Lyon taught some 139 students; the following year, in 1938, the number increased to 296 students. Because of Lyon’s expertise and interest in LDS History (he had completed a master’s in American Religious History at the University of Chicago, writing a thesis on the first Mormon theologian, Orson Pratt),<sup>138</sup> he added two new courses to the curriculum: “Doctrine and Covenants” and “History of the LDS Church.” Like Bennion, Lyon was an energetic, dynamic teacher; he also directed the social

---

<sup>137</sup> Jr. Lyon, T. Edgar, *T. Edgar Lyon: A Teacher in Zion* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2002), 109.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

activities and supported all the events of Lambda Delta Sigma. The first group of Lyon's students recalls him as "warm, congenial, considerate."<sup>139</sup>

When Lowell Bennion returned as director in 1939, Lyon was made "associate director." And although older and with more Church experience, it did not bother Lyon that Bennion was the director. At Lyon's funeral, Bennion made this comment: "Ed Lyon was not envious nor resentful as my associate director, but wholly loyal and cooperative."<sup>140</sup> After the return of Bennion, the two of them worked as a compatible team. Bennion wrote about their compatibility: "We were a good blend, [we] complemented each other. If students didn't like Ed, they came to me. If they didn't like me, they went to him, so we were a good balance."<sup>141</sup> Lowell Bennion and T. Edgar Lyon worked together at the same Institute from 1939 to 1962. During those years the Salt Lake Institute witnessed some dramatic increases in enrollments; in 1935 Bennion began with 84 students; by the late 1930s they had increased enrollments to 368 students; after World War II the enrollments increased to over 1,000 students. The last year they taught together, 1961-1962, the enrollment had increased to 2, 229 students. The Salt Lake Institute was established and nurtured by Lowell Bennion and later assisted by T. Edgar Lyon. When asked one time what was the purpose of the Institute, Lowell Bennion gave this reply: "The basic purpose of the Institute was to help college students keep the faith, to give them a picture of religion that was compatible with what they were learning on

---

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Lowell L. Bennion, "Reflections on T. Edgar Lyon: A Tribute Given at His Funeral," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11, no. 4 (1978): 13.

<sup>141</sup> Fletcher, "Interview with Lowell L. Bennion," 9.

campus.”<sup>142</sup> Bennion and Lyon attempted with all their combined energy to achieve that basic purpose. Bennion had been trained by the secular world when he obtained his Ph.D. in sociology; he knew the secular language and secular culture and he had mastered both. As an Institute director and teacher he knew how to teach young people what they needed to know to “keep the faith” and at the same time reconcile the secular learning that they were receiving at the U of U. He had a vision of religious education that could reconcile religious truths with secular learning. He was a master at that reconciliation.

### **The Fifth Institute: The Institute at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California**

Technically speaking, if one goes strictly by the chronology of the year in which the Institute was established, there appears to be a “tie” between the Laramie Institute and the Los Angeles Institute at the University of Southern California because both were started in 1935. The Laramie Institute was established by J. Wyley Sessions and his wife, Magdalen. During the spring semester of 1934 while Sessions was teaching classes at the Pocatello Institute, Commissioner of Church Education, John A. Widtsoe, called Sessions to establish the Laramie Institute at the request of the University of Wyoming president, Arthur C. Crane. The Sessions left Pocatello at the end of the spring semester and moved to Laramie. Sessions summarized what they did during the academic year of 1934-1935, a familiar story by now because it was similar to what they had done at Moscow and Pocatello: “At the end of one year, we built the building during the year, and established

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 8.

an Institute in Laramie, Wyoming.”<sup>143</sup> The new Institute building was dedicated by President Heber J. Grant on Sunday, March 29, 1936.<sup>144</sup> In the General Conference of the Church held on April 5, 1936, President Grant shared with the general membership of the Church his impressions of visiting Laramie and dedicating the Institute: “Never before in my life have I been treated more kindly, and with more respect than upon that occasion.”<sup>145</sup>

### **Origins and Characteristics of Los Angeles, California**

Los Angeles was founded on September 4, 1781, by order of King Carlos III of Spain to Felipe de Neve, then the Spanish governor of California. It was known at the time as *el pueblo de la Reina de los Angeles*, the town of the Queen of Angels.<sup>146</sup> The original forty-four settlers of the town slowly grew to more than five hundred by 1811. The first American to arrive in Los Angeles was Joseph Chapman, a Boston carpenter. More and more Americans continued to pour into the city. By 1846 the war between Mexico and the United States was under way. On April 4, 1850, approximately five months before California joined the union, Los Angeles was incorporated as an American city. The huge growth in Los Angeles occurred with the discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill. With the gold rush, journalist Norman Dash concludes, “Life suddenly changed for

---

<sup>143</sup> Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 10.

<sup>144</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Dedication and Official Opening of the Laramie Latter-day Saint Institute," (Laramie, Wyoming 1936).

<sup>145</sup> Heber J. Grant, "A Seminary in Wyoming," *Improvement Era* 1936.

<sup>146</sup> Norman Dash, *Yesterday's Los Angeles*, 30 vols., vol. Seemann's Historic Cities Series No. 26, Seemann's Historic Cities (Miami, FL: E. A. Seemann Publishing, 1976), 11.



the Angelinos, . . . the drizzle of humanity to the city became a deluge, and the old rancho life was gone forever.”<sup>147</sup>

The influx of people into Los Angeles continued over the next decades. It is estimated that by 1880 the city had increased to 16,000 persons; with the development of the railroads came more and more people until in 1890 the population hit 50,000. The growth trend continued until by the turn of the century Los Angeles had increased to more than 100,000 residents. This rapid growth pattern continued despite periodic real estate failures, dry seasons in agriculture, and national economic panics. In the first decade of the twentieth century the people of Los Angeles accepted the automobile; this acceptance would eventually turn into a love affair. By the 1920s, Los Angeles passed San Francisco as the largest city within the state. During this decade Angelinos embraced the automobile because “abundant oil supplies meant cheap gasoline, and the climate made driving easy.”<sup>148</sup> In addition to the automobile, most residents of Los Angeles accepted the “movies, the radio, and other products of the new technology.”<sup>149</sup> Some became fascinated with the “flappers,” the new moral standards, and the ideas associated with modernism. Others kept their traditional values and supported “prohibition, religious fundamentalism, and the nativism of the Ku Klux Klan.”<sup>150</sup> It is estimated that between 1920 and 1930 two million people came to California with two thirds settling in Southern California. The economic prosperity witnessed by the people of Los Angeles was due to

---

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>148</sup> Richard B. Rice, William A. Bullough, and Richard J. Orsi, *The Elusive Eden: A New History of California*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 377.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 373.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

the boom in the oil business, agriculture, the automobile industry, the new aviation industry, the real estate industry, and of course, the movie industry when Hollywood became the movie capital of the world. In fact, “between 1916 and 1946 movie making was the biggest industry in Southern California.”<sup>151</sup>

### **Los Angeles, California, during the 1930s**

In sharp contrast to the economic prosperity of the 1920s, like the rest of the United States, the 1930s brought economic disaster to Los Angeles. Despite the seemingly strong economic base and the past periods of prosperity, nevertheless, the Great Depression had a strong negative effect on Los Angeles. According to historians Rice, Bullough, and Orsi, because the economy was based on a high percentage of workers in the service occupations and the highest proportion of elderly people in the nation lived here meant that the Southern California economy was “devastated” when the Great Depression hit.<sup>152</sup> Furthermore, because Southern California’s economy was tied to “specialty crops,” tourism, and the movie industry, it was even more vulnerable to the severe national economic downturn.<sup>153</sup>

One of the major problems in Southern California was the arrival of transient homeless men and women; it has been estimated that “wandering families and unattached men, women, boys, and girls entered the state at a rate approaching a thousand a day.”<sup>154</sup> This presented a huge challenge to the state, county, and city government on how to feed,

---

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 397.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 396.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 400.

clothe, and employ such a large group of people. Eventually by 1935 the federal government established the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which focused on offering relief in public works projects. After 1935, began the huge influx of nearly 300,000 Midwestern farmers into California. Most of them migrated from the lower Plains states, especially Oklahoma, and were generally called “Okies.”<sup>155</sup> Due to the years of drought in their home states, turning productive agricultural land into a “dust bowl,” and the image created by the California “boosters” that it was the Land of Promise, it was logical that the “Okies” would head to California. They arrived at a critical time in California’s agricultural history; growers faced the issue of either raising the pay of farm laborers or increasing the mechanization of their enterprise. With the arrival of the Okies, who were willing to accept a lower wage than the Mexican workers, they displaced the Mexicans as the farm work force. In summary, the Great Depression brought numerous economic and social problems to Southern California. Journalist Norman Dash summarizes the period: “Some four hundred thousand persons walked the streets [of Los Angeles], without money for food or rent. . . . It was a time of despair.”<sup>156</sup>

### **Significant Socio-Cultural Issues Relevant to the Latter-day Saint World View and the Establishment of an Institute in Los Angeles in 1935**

In explaining the reasons for an Institute to be established in Los Angeles in 1935, there were three socio-cultural issues that were relevant in this decision. First, the issue of worldliness during the 1920s and continuing in the 1930s was a primary concern for the

---

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>156</sup> Dash, *Yesterday's Los Angeles*, Seemann's Historic Cities Series No. 26: 137.

leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This was true nationally, but it was especially true of growing urban areas like Los Angeles. Even before the appearance of the “flapper” of the 1920s, the First Presidency noted in a letter to the female leaders of the Relief Society (the LDS women’s organization, for females ages eighteen and older), the Y.L.M.I.A. (the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association, for females ages twelve to eighteen), and Primary Association (the children’s organization, for children ages three to eleven) that there was a general problem with dress and social practices. Dated September 22, 1916, the First Presidency stated: “We feel that there exists a pressing need of improvement and reform among our young people, specifically in the matter of dress and in their social customs and practices.”<sup>157</sup> That same theme was repeated throughout the next decade and reinforced in the 1930s.

Melvin J. Ballard, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles, addressed the theme of maintaining moral standards when he spoke to a group of LDS Church youth leaders who had assembled in Salt Lake City in June 1934. He referred to the “moral crisis” that was occurring in the world, but he framed it as an opportunity: “The moral crisis in the world offers to Latter-day Saint youth a glorious opportunity to arise and shine and hold up standards that will attract the attention of the ends of the earth.”<sup>158</sup> He praised the youth of the Church as “the finest young people who have ever been born in the history of this world, . . .”<sup>159</sup> but at the same time it was a generation that was faced with serious difficulties. From Ballard’s perspective, one of the biggest challenges that

---

<sup>157</sup> James R. Clark, ed. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916-1934*, 6 vols., vol. 5 (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1971), 37.

<sup>158</sup> Melvin J. Ballard, “Morality and the New Day,” *Improvement Era* 1934, 515.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

the young people were facing was that they “have been introduced into an age that questions all the standards of the past, an age that is discarding many of these standards.”<sup>160</sup> He argued for the continuation of the observance of moral standards: “the moral standards set up by his Church are standards which must remain and which cannot be changed or modified without disaster to us.”<sup>161</sup> He then referred to two of the sources of temptation that were prevalent in American society in 1934: first, “the portrayal of the sex question in moving pictures” and second, “the display of the human body by the styles and customs of our day.”<sup>162</sup> He concluded his address by emphasizing the rewards for maintaining and following moral standards: “So we feel the reasons are ample to justify us in maintaining our standards and the rewards are great enough to inspire us to live up to them.”<sup>163</sup>

Continuing on a theme raised by Melvin J. Ballard, the Latter-day Saint Church leaders were very concerned about the effects of the movies that were being produced and shown in the local movie theaters. Again, this is related to the issue of worldliness; along with the many creative and artistic movies that came from Hollywood, some producers chose to make a series of risqué movies that appealed to baser human instincts. With the threat of government intervention and possible censorship combined with the loss of public support for their movies, the movie industry decided to hire Will H. Hays away from his position as Postmaster General to become the Hollywood “Movie Czar.” Once in office, Hays “issued a code of ethics and plan for self-regulation of the movies

---

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 516.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 527.

that effectively recovered public support.”<sup>164</sup> When “Movie Czar” Will Hays started to clean up Hollywood, President Heber J. Grant, who was sustained president of the Church in 1918 at the passing of Joseph F. Smith, sent Senator Reed Smoot the following telegram: “The first presidency appreciate highly what Mr. Hays has done in suppressing the a[A]rbuckle [Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle, a silent film star and film producer, had a reputation of living a “scandalous” life and promoting “risqué” movies, or at least objectionable to religious and educational groups] and other improper films.”<sup>165</sup> President Grant wanted Senator Reed Smoot to use his influence and the influence of the Church to thank Hays for his work in cleaning up the movie industry, a major moral concern for the Church.

A final socio-cultural issue was centered in the American university in the 1920s and 1930s, the influence of the fraternities and sororities during those two decades. The Church was combating the secularization of higher education by operating its own university, Brigham Young University, and by offering high school students the seminary program. It had grave concerns about the worldly nature of the fraternities and sororities that had become so popular on many American campuses. This was especially true of the University of Southern California (USC). When Rufus Bernhard von KleinSmid became president of USC in 1921, he realized that to build the “expanded” university that he envisioned, transforming the forty-year old “inwardly focused” Methodist college into a secular university, he would need money to fund his building projects and the expansion

---

<sup>164</sup> Rice, *Elusive Eden: A New History of California*: 389.

<sup>165</sup> Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 199.

of the professional schools that would build the future of Los Angeles. One potential source of income was to cultivate football, which was to become one of his primary projects. This left no funds for dormitories, so “von KleinSmid encouraged the presence of Greek fraternities and sororities as a housing alternative. These organizations soon dominated undergraduate life, creating a rah-rah atmosphere energized by crosscurrents of restrictive Babbitry and contempt for people and values outside the WASP mainstream.”<sup>166</sup> USC’s fraternities and sororities created a secular, worldly milieu and campus that journalist Victor Walkers described in the mid-1920s as “large, sprawling, noisy and vulgar, . . .”<sup>167</sup>

The influence and effects of the fraternity and sorority movement on the American university has been well documented,<sup>168</sup> so suffice it to mention only a few brief ideas relative to the establishment of the Los Angeles Institute. In the early days of the fraternity movement, faculties were often opposed to them, using the same arguments against them that they used in opposing athletics. Universities preferred that students participated in university-sponsored literary societies that were seen as complementary organizations to the university that facilitated character development and socialization.

---

<sup>166</sup> Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s*, Americans and the California Dream (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 155.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Historian Nicholas L. Syrett has documented what I am calling "worldliness" of the white college fraternities in Chapter 5, "Fussers and Fast Women: Fraternity Men in the 1920s," pp. 183-228. See Nicholas L. Syrett, *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities*, ed. Thadius M. Davis and Mary Kelly, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Two other authors document the worldliness and the emphasis on sexuality during the 1920s and leading into the 1930s. See Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987). Horowitz also describes and analyzes the function and characteristics of sororities in this same era. See also Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

For example, at the University of Illinois in 1885 when fraternities wanted to be officially recognized and accepted by the university, the Regent (or president), Selim H. Peabody, presented what he considered the strongest arguments against fraternities:

1. They interfere seriously with the real business for which young men and women enter college life.
2. They become the nuclei of cliques . . . .
3. [They] interfere often very seriously with college discipline.
4. They become centers of college politics.
5. They very largely increase the expenses of college residence.<sup>169</sup>

Beyond these stated arguments, historian Joseph R. DeMartini asserts that one of the main reasons that the administration and faculty fought the acceptance of the fraternities and athletics is that they “competed with the Regent and faculty for control and direction of students’ behavior.”<sup>170</sup> In addition, DeMartini interprets the fraternity movement and athletics as essential parts of the new student culture. He argues that the fraternities and athletics “comprised the center of a new student culture, secular, other-worldly, complementary to a student body upwardly mobile in a rapidly changing social milieu.”<sup>171</sup> Taking DeMartini’s assertion that the fraternities and athletics were the center of the new student culture and that they were secular and other-worldly, this is corroboration that secularization and worldliness were factors in creation of the religious education movements of the IRM. . The issue of worldliness with its manifestations through USC’s fraternities and sororities was a major concern of LDS Church leaders.

### **The Latter-day Saint Presence in Los Angeles in the 1920s and 1930s**

---

<sup>169</sup> Joseph R. DeMartini, "Student Culture as a Change Agent in American Higher Education: An Illustration from the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Social History* 9, no. 4 (1976): 531.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.



Latter-day Saints have been in California ever since Samuel Brannan's group of Church members arrived aboard the ship Brooklyn in San Francisco Bay in July 1846. Since 1846 there have always been Mormons in California.<sup>172</sup> By 1923 there were 1,448 members of the Church in Los Angeles with five Wards (a ward being a unit of Church members within a defined geographic boundary presided over by a bishop and other officers). Four years later, the Church membership had increased to 3,493 with seven Wards. In 1928 the number of members increased to 4,528 with nine Wards. A decade later, the number of members had increased to 8,200 with the same number of nine Wards.<sup>173</sup> In a religious survey conducted in Los Angeles in 1926, the researcher ranked the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in tenth place in size among "Protestant" groups. The ratio of Latter-day Saints compared to the total population in Los Angeles was one LDS to every 284 inhabitants.<sup>174</sup>

In G. Byron Done's sociological study of Latter-day Saints' participation in the community life of Los Angeles conducted in 1939, he discovered that one of the primary motives for Latter-day Saints to leave Utah and to come to Los Angeles was economic. He found that "at least 3,000 young people must leave this state [Utah] every year to seek employment elsewhere."<sup>175</sup> Dr. Sterling M. McMurrin, in 1947 a professor in the School of Philosophy at USC, explains the reasons for the exodus of the young people from Utah and the attraction of California: "Unemployment in the cities and crowding on the farms

---

<sup>172</sup> Eugene Edward Campbell, "A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in California, 1846-1946" (Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1952), 1.

<sup>173</sup> G. Byron Done, "The Participation of the Latter-day Saints in the Community Life of Los Angeles" (Dissertation University of Southern California, 1939), 97.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

in the Mormon country pushed thousands of people into California with its rapidly growing communities, expanding economy, and bright promise for the future.”<sup>176</sup> In addition, Done determined that most of those coming to Los Angeles had just graduated from high school or college. His survey determined that “95 per cent of the Latter-day Saints living in Los Angeles came with the idea of bettering themselves *economically*.”<sup>177</sup> The second reason for coming to Southern California was for *health* reasons (representing 4 per cent of the sample). The third reason given was for *cultural* reasons (representing only one per cent of the sample).<sup>178</sup> As historian Eugene Campbell concluded his history of Latter-day Saints in California, he noted, “Although the Church has made sizable gains in California, it is still very much in the minority in every area in which it is located.”<sup>179</sup> His conclusion applies in 1946 as well as in 1934, the year before the Institute was established.

One of the key issues in establishing the Institute in Los Angeles, besides the socio-cultural issues mentioned above, was the idea of providing activities for Latter-day Saint young people with other members of the Church. Because they were such a minority in the community, “most of their daily social contacts [were] with nonmembers.” Researcher G. Byron Done concluded that the weekday religious education for Latter-day Saints in the intermountain region was very effective “for maintaining the religious, social and civic solidarity of its members.” He argued that “its chief value lies in the increased daily social contacts of Mormon youth with their own

---

<sup>176</sup> Leo J. Muir, *A Century of Mormon Activities in California: Volume 1, Historical*, 2 vols., vol. 1, *A Century of Mormon Activities in California* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, n. d. [1952?]), 316.

<sup>177</sup> Done, “Participation of the Latter-day Saints in the Community Life of Los Angeles,” 100.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Campbell, “History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in California, 1846-1946,” 411.

kind.”<sup>180</sup> From Done’s perspective, an Institute in Los Angeles would not only provide Latter-day Saints religious education, it would also provide opportunities for social contacts with other Latter-day Saints with the overall end result of maintaining the young people as faithful members of the Church. Another result would be that Latter-day Saint young people would be interacting among each other which would provide them dating opportunities that could eventually lead to marriage within the faith.

### **The Role of the University of Southern California in the Establishment of the Los Angeles Institute**

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to focus on the Los Angeles Institute because of its distinctiveness in how it was established and because of its location away from the perceived “Mormon Country” of the intermountain West. In this section I trace the establishment of the Los Angeles Institute, answering the question: how did it get started and why in Los Angeles? The genesis of the answer to this question is directly connected with the University of Southern California (hereafter USC), originally a Methodist university founded on June 29, 1879, in Los Angeles, California. The founders of the university proclaimed, in characteristic language of the era, the purpose of this new institution: “To the glory of God and the preservation of the Republic; An Institution of Higher Learning dedicated to the search for and dissemination of the Truth; . . . to the development of Manhood and Womanhood for Christian service and loyal

---

<sup>180</sup> Done, “Participation of the Latter-day Saints in the Community Life of Los Angeles,” 33.

citizenship.”<sup>181</sup> For the first decades of USC, there was a distinct Methodist milieu created: from the president of the university, usually a Methodist minister, to the Trustees who were, according to their bylaws, the majority to be “men who were Methodist Church members,”<sup>182</sup> to the faculty members, most of whom were Methodists, or at least Protestants. Chapel exercises were held daily, under the direction of the president, with mandatory attendance.<sup>183</sup>

The direction of the Methodist milieu was reoriented somewhat in 1921 with the hiring of Rufus B. von KleinSmid, the first president of the university who was not a Methodist minister.<sup>184</sup> He was a very devout Protestant (as a boy in Illinois he attended both Methodist and Congregational Churches, and one historian classified him as “a nondrinking and nonsmoking Methodist”)<sup>185</sup> and yet von KleinSmid has been credited during his presidency from 1921-1936 with leading USC from a Methodist university into a broader, secularized, nondenominational institution. President von KleinSmid retained the values he learned as a boy: “A strong sense of loyalty, duty, order, hard work, uprightness, dignity, a high Christian morality, and good business principles were the salient ingredient of the moral and value structure of the KleinSmid household.”<sup>186</sup>

With the permission and blessing of President von KleinSmid, USC created the

---

<sup>181</sup>Manuel P. Servin, and Iris Higbie Wilson, *Southern California and Its University: A History of U.S.C., 1880-1964* (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1969), vii.

<sup>182</sup> Curtiss Randall Hungerford, "A Study in University Administrative Leadership: Rufus B. von Kleinsmid and the University of Southern California, 1921-1935" (Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1968), 67.

<sup>183</sup> Servin, *Southern California and Its University*: 119.

<sup>184</sup> Hungerford, "A Study in University Administrative Leadership," 78.

<sup>185</sup> Servin, *Southern California and Its University*: 116.

<sup>186</sup> Hungerford, "A Study in University Administrative Leadership," 49-50.

University Religious Conference (URC) to organize the many religious groups represented in the university student body.

In 1935 the members of the URC, which included Carl Sumner Knopf, dean of the School of Religion, and President von KleinSmid, initiated an experiment to allow university credit for religion classes offered by the religious bodies of the members of the URC. They reasoned that if the university was granting credit for almost any philosophy, modern or ancient, it seemed wrong because of the separation of church and state, to deny credit for classes teaching the theology of the current religious bodies. So, each member of the URC was invited to develop its own religious curriculum, select its own teacher, and present its own classes at USC for university credit.

Originally, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was not invited to participate because of a misconception of the members of the URC.<sup>187</sup> Members of the URC assumed that the Latter-day Saints were just “another Protestant” denomination. Preston D. Richards, legal counsel to the URC, and Professor Eugene L. Roberts,<sup>188</sup> a USC faculty member, were Latter-day Saints, and they informed the members of the URC that Mormonism, while Christian, was not Protestant; by definition, Protestant

---

<sup>187</sup> David B. Rimington, *Vistas on Visions: A Golden Anniversary History of Church Education in Southern California* (Anaheim, CA: Shumway Family History Services, 1988), xvii.

<sup>188</sup> Eugene Lusk Roberts completed his education with an A.B. degree from Brigham Young University; he also completed graduate work at the University of Utah, Yale University, and the University of Wisconsin. Prior to his arrival at the University of Southern California, he was the Director of Physical Education and Athletics at BYU from 1911 to 1928. He moved with his family to Los Angeles to do graduate work at USC and act as a teaching fellow in 1928. The next year he accepted a position with USC as the director of teacher-training for the men's division of Physical Education. He served in that capacity for seventeen years. He was influential in serving his Church and his university. See Leo J. Muir, *A Century of Mormon Activities in California: Volume 2, Biographical*, 2 vols., vol. 2, *A Century of Mormon Activities in California* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1952), 338-40.

religious bodies “protested” the religious beliefs of Roman Catholicism and broke away from it. According to theologian André Birmelé, “At the second Diet of Speyer (1529) the representatives of the Reformers ‘protested’ in favor of the liberty of individuals to choose their own religion according to their conscience.”<sup>189</sup> Latter-day Saints claim to be a “restored” Church, and as such did not “break away” from any other denomination. Accepting this explanation, the URC included the Latter-day Saints in the program, separate from the Protestants. The final five groups which were invited to participate were (according to the USC announcement): “(1) The Protestant churches; (2) The Catholic church; (3) the Episcopal church; (4) The Jewish synagogue; (5) The Mormon church.”<sup>190</sup>

The general announcement for the classes was released under the department of “Biblical Literature,” and called the class “Religion 60: The Church and Its Program.” The course description stated: “An analytical survey of the origin, development, international distribution, organization, and administration of a church program. Its tenets, forms of worship, practices, social services, and publications.”<sup>191</sup> USC was allowing each denomination to select its own instructor, but it stipulated that he or she was to have “the full professional rating required for faculty status at USC,”<sup>192</sup> thus protecting and ensuring the academic integrity of the program. This requirement meant

---

<sup>189</sup> Andre Birmele, "Protestantism," in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1303.

<sup>190</sup> Alan K. Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003), 534.

<sup>191</sup> ———, "University Credit for L.D.S. Religion Classes at U.S.C.: A Mormon Apostle in Trojan Classrooms," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: California*, ed. Robert C. Freeman, David F. Boone, Andrew H. Hedges, and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel (Provo, UT: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1998), 168.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

that only someone with a Ph.D. could be chosen to teach the class. In the LDS Church Education System in 1935, the number of educators holding a Ph.D. was a very small group.

Preston D. Richards, the legal counsel to the URC, had been a prominent Latter-day Saint attorney in Salt Lake City, having received his law degree cum laude from the University of Chicago. In 1915 he began his legal practice as a law partner of J. Reuben Clark, Jr., with offices in Salt Lake City, Washington, D.C., and New York, under the firm name of Clark and Richards.<sup>193</sup> J. Reuben Clark, Jr., had served in the State Department for years, culminating his government service as the ambassador to Mexico when he was called to be the Second Counselor in the First Presidency in 1931. Clark completed his service as ambassador and then officially entered his position in the First Presidency in March 1933 and was sustained by the membership of the Church in General Conference on April 9, 1933.<sup>194</sup> With J. Reuben Clark, Jr., as his ally, Richards had a strong advocate with the President of the Church, Heber J. Grant. Richards was going to need to use that influence from his law partner in order to convince President Grant that he should allow John A. Widtsoe basically a year's leave of absence from his duties as Church Commissioner of Education and member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

In 1928 Richards moved from Utah to the Los Angeles area and was very desirous to advance the presence and image of the Latter-day Saint Church in Southern

---

<sup>193</sup> Muir, *Century of Mormon Activities in California: Volume 2, Biographical*, 2: 334.

<sup>194</sup> D. Michael Quinn, *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years*, ed. general editor David H. Yarn, 3 vols., vol. 2, *Life and Work of J. Reuben Clark, Jr.* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1983), 53.

California. In order to do this, he became involved in the religious life of the colleges and universities of Los Angeles. Besides serving as the legal counsel for the URC at USC, he “was also the foremost figure in the Mormon group in the establishment and promotion of the Religious Conference at the University of California in Los Angeles.”<sup>195</sup> He also helped found what the Church called “Deseret Clubs” (social and instructional programs) both at USC, UCLA, and at other colleges in the area. These Deseret Clubs were the direct precursors to the Institutes of Religion that would eventually be established in the Los Angeles area.

When Richards convinced the URC at USC to include the Mormons in offering a credit class on campus, he realized that it represented a “rare opportunity to anchor the position of the Church” in the area and “it was bound to lead to heightened publicity and substantial increases in religious and academic credibility.”<sup>196</sup> Richards felt that in order to take full advantage of this opportunity that he needed to convince Commissioner of Education, Dr. John A. Widtsoe, that he should be the one chosen to teach at USC. Richards also realized that he needed to convince the First Presidency of the importance of allowing Widtsoe to accept the opportunity.

On July 21, 1935, Richards sent a letter to Widtsoe informing him of the invitation to offer the class, mentioning to Widtsoe that he had already contacted the First Presidency, but no action was taken. In August, Richards requested to meet with Widtsoe while he was in Los Angeles on Church business. In this second letter to Widtsoe,

---

<sup>195</sup> Muir, *Century of Mormon Activities in California: Volume 2, Biographical*, 2: 335.

<sup>196</sup> Parrish, "University Credit for L.D.S. Religion Classes at U.S.C.: A Mormon Apostle in Trojan Classrooms.", 169.



Richards emphasized how important it was that Widtsoe be the teacher for the USC course: “It is my thought that this course, because of its extreme importance, should be given by yourself, as Commissioner of Education.”<sup>197</sup> With Widtsoe’s qualifications, a two-time university president, his degrees from Harvard and Göttingen, and his international reputation in science, Richards felt that Widtsoe was the only educator in the LDS Church who would be the perfect match to teach the classes at USC. August passed, and no action was taken. Finally, by telegram, on September 12, 1935, Richards, in a desperate tone, informed Widtsoe that the name of the teacher was needed so that USC could print the announcement in the class schedule. Widtsoe wired back that same day that he would be able to teach the class. Richards worked with USC in getting all the details worked out for Dr. Widtsoe.

John A. Widtsoe had spent his entire life either in teaching, doing research, or presiding at the university level. He was the perfect match for teaching the class on Mormonism at USC. Nevertheless, he had some personal concerns that he shared in a letter: “I only have two fears with respect to the experiment: First, that I personally may not give an adequate account of myself; second, that there may be a lack of interest on the part of the people in the course, so that we suffer thereby in comparison with the others.”<sup>198</sup> These fears and self-doubts were truly unfounded; he was prepared intellectually and spiritually to do an excellent job as a teacher. He had Richards work with the stake presidents in Los Angeles to publicize the classes to the college-aged

---

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 171.

adults to ensure that there were enough to attend the classes. In his memoirs, he summarizes his experience at USC: “I was appointed to inaugurate the work for the Church and my wife and I spent the school year of 1935-1936 in Los Angeles. The classes were well attended and successful.”<sup>199</sup> His morning class was about the size of those of the other denominations, but his night class had as high as 75 students. In a letter to Widtsoe, the First Presidency speculated on the results of his teaching at USC: “We are impressed with the feeling that what you are doing is laying the foundation of something which will be a very rich benefit to the Church, and you have our confidence and blessing as you pioneer this important movement.”<sup>200</sup> The potential for raising the public image of the Church in Southern California along with the personal influence of John A. Widtsoe on the lives of the students enrolled at USC was strong enough motivation for the First Presidency to allow the Commissioner of Church Education and a General Authority of the Church to justify his absence from his duties in Salt Lake City.

Dr. Widtsoe was able to cover the full range of topics regarding the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: the purpose of the Church, its practices, its organization, its origins, and the message of the Doctrine and Covenants. The third quarter classes enjoyed even more success than classes presented in the fall. His course on the Doctrine and Covenants had a registration of more than 90 and according to USC “is rated as the largest theological class, and the largest class irregardless of the number

---

<sup>199</sup>John A. Widtsoe, *In a Sunlit Land: The Autobiography of John A. Widtsoe* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1952), 173.

<sup>200</sup>Parrish, "University Credit for L.D.S. Religion Classes at U.S.C.: A Mormon Apostle in Trojan Classrooms," 177.

of students attending the university.”<sup>201</sup> As a side benefit from the courses taught at USC, Widtsoe organized his lecture notes and out of them he wrote a textbook for Church education entitled *Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* that was published in 1937. As Dr. Widtsoe concluded his year’s teaching at USC, he wrote this about the students he had taught: “Our young people represent the real Church problem in Los Angeles. Every effort should be made to hold them.”<sup>202</sup> Widtsoe was concerned about the issue of secularization and its debilitating effect on religious faith; he advocated “holding” the college-aged students through religious education so that they could maintain their religious faith. He strongly urged the URC to continue to offer the religion classes; his final conclusion: “The experiment in religious education undertaken by the U.S.C. is the greatest educational venture of my day. May it prosper.”<sup>203</sup>

Thelma Lees was a student in Dr. Widtsoe’s night class for Religion 60 (1B). She was born in 1909 in Boise, Idaho, and came with her family to California where she grew up. In 1936 Thelma was not a full-time coed at USC, but because John A. Widtsoe had such prestige as an apostle in the LDS Church, she enrolled in his evening class. Thelma lived within a short distance of USC and she attended and enjoyed each class session. She eventually attended the University of Utah; there she met her future husband, but would not accept his marriage offer until she had graduated with her teaching credential in 1929. Even after she was married, one of her prized possessions was the original mimeographed

---

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>202</sup> Parrish, *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography*: 545.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

syllabus that she received while taking the course.<sup>204</sup> She loved education and eventually used her teaching credential as an elementary school teacher. On the final page of the syllabus (which he expressed verbally in his final lecture of the class), Dr. Widtsoe emphasized his feelings about the importance of USC offering credit for the religious classes: “This experiment in religious education in which you have taken part is, as I have said before, one of the greatest educational experiments undertaken in America. We hope it may be successful.”<sup>205</sup> Widtsoe expressed his thanks to the students who made the program successful: “I want to express to you and the two evening classes which have gone before, my sincere thanks for their support, not as a personal matter, for the support you have given has been to the Church. We are a Church of pioneers, and I shall treasure your names as pioneers in this educational movement.”<sup>206</sup> In the same lecture Dr. Widtsoe speculated about the instructor in the future—“The work will continue next year. I may be here, or someone else, but someone will be here to conduct a course in the field of the Book of Mormon or something else of the kind, . . .”<sup>207</sup>

The experience that John A. Widtsoe had while teaching “Religion 60: The Church and Its Program” at USC made such an impression upon him, that it was the theme of his general conference address to the entire Church in April 1936. He shared with the general membership what his experience was and what it meant to him and to his

---

<sup>204</sup> John A. Widtsoe, "Religion 60 (1B), The Program of the "Mormon" Church," (Los Angeles, California 1936). Thelma kept the original syllabus as a prized possession during her lifetime; at her passing, the syllabus was acquired by her oldest son, Dennis Sant of Villa Park, California. Mr. Sant graciously shared the syllabus with the author and gave me permission to make a photocopy of it.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

students. To begin his address, Widtsoe shared that he had been spending the last few months teaching:

I have been engaged in a direct, positive experiment to solve some of the social and economic ills that have been talked about today and yesterday in this conference. I have had the privilege of teaching Mormonism, the principles, practice, and history of it, to university classes for university credit as if the subject were one of the recognized university subjects. It has been a rare opportunity. Four other churches have had the same privilege. It is a courageous experiment undertaken by the University of Southern California. The reason for undertaking this experience is simple enough. Thinking men have come to the conclusion that there is only one way out of our difficulties in the country and throughout the world. No plan made by congress or by private individuals for economic and social recovery will succeed except upon the basis of the acceptance of religion. By the acceptance and practice of spiritual truth alone shall we find our way back to economic stability and social happiness.<sup>208</sup>

The religious classes that John A. Widtsoe taught at USC were the foundation from which was launched the IRM in Southern California. Leonard Arrington, who served for ten years as the official Church Historian, noted the contribution of Widtsoe to the IRM: "The first Institute to be established outside the intermountain area was at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles; it was founded under the direction of Dr. John A. Widtsoe in 1935."<sup>209</sup>

At the end of spring quarter in 1936, Widtsoe chose his replacement to teach and to supervise the Deseret Clubs in Southern California, G. Byron Done. Done had been one of the eleven Latter-day Saints who did graduate work at the University of Chicago

---

<sup>208</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "A Courageous Experiment," *Conference Report*, April 1936, 69-70.

<sup>209</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, "The Founding of the L.D.S. Institutes of Religion," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 2 (1967): 144.

in the 1930s.<sup>210</sup> As part of the “Chicago experiment,” Done pursued a degree in sociology which he did not complete because of his assignment to Los Angeles to be Dr. Widtsoe’s replacement. He was originally hired to teach seminary in Blackfoot, Idaho, which he did from 1929-1936.<sup>211</sup> From Idaho he was transferred to Los Angeles. At the beginning of his assignment there already existed a Deseret Club at UCLA. On September 20, 1936, Done established a Deseret Club at USC in addition to the teaching of two religion classes. Later in the fall he established another Deseret Club at Pasadena City College (PCC). Eventually in May of 1939 the Los Angeles Institute was officially established at USC with Done as the director with the Deseret Clubs being incorporated into the Institutes. From 1936 until 1956 G. Byron Done was the Institute director at the Los Angeles Institute. He called himself an “itinerant teacher,” traveling from USC to the other colleges and community colleges in the area. On December 11, 1953, the Institute building near the USC campus was dedicated. It became the home for the IRM in Southern California.<sup>212</sup>

### **Conclusion: The Founding of the Institutes Two through Five, 1928-1935**

One of the common threads interwoven in the establishment of the Institutes two through five is the actions and effects of one person that seems to have such an impact on the success of the enterprise. We have seen that with the influence of W. W. Henderson, Thomas C. Romney, J. Wyley Sessions, Lowell L. Bennion, T. Edgar Lyon, and G.

---

<sup>210</sup> Griffiths, "The Chicago Experiment," 91-92.

<sup>211</sup> Muir, *Century of Mormon Activities in California: Volume 1, Historical*, 1: 319.

<sup>212</sup> Rimington, *Vistas on Visions: A Golden Anniversary History of Church Education in Southern California*: 11.

Byron Done. A second common thread is the institutional support of the religious body that sponsors the Institutes seems to be part of the critical mass that is necessary to have success. The combination of determined individual effort combined with institutional support seems to be part of the equation for establishing a viable religious education program for postsecondary students. An important third factor in this equation is the leadership factor of the person directing the overall scope of an educational system. When the leader of the educational system has a clear vision of what is to be done to accomplish common goals, then it appears that success is usually achieved. If the leader lacks that clear vision, the opposite effect seems to hold; the same type of success seems to be elusive and mercurial. As witnessed by the superintendents and commissioners of Church education in the period covered by this study, the 1920s and 1930s, each superintendent or commissioner played an important role in creating the vision of what the Church wanted to accomplish, choosing the right people to help accomplish their goals, and creating a culture and environment that was conducive to the creativity and energy needed to achieve a successful religious educational program. We certainly saw evidence of that with the contributions of Adam S. Bennion, John A. Widtsoe, and Joseph R. Merrill.

Returning to the theoretical framework that I proposed in Chapter 1, how do secularization, worldliness, and orthodoxy apply to the establishment of Institutes two through five? Each Institute that was established from 1928 to 1936 had its own socio-cultural milieu, usually reflecting the values and interests of its neighboring institution. In the case of the Logan Institute, the impetus to establish it came from eight local stake

presidents in the Logan area. Because the request for the Institute was initiated by the local Church leaders, I interpret that as concern “to hold them in the Church,” (Joseph F. Merrill’s phrase) which was an issue of orthodoxy. With ninety percent of the student body members of the Latter-day Saint Church, the success of the Logan Institute seemed almost guaranteed because the socio-cultural milieu was largely controlled by the Church.

The Pocatello Institute had to deal with a different socio-cultural milieu; because the Latter-day Saints were not the majority, the Latter-day Saint students at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho had to deal with other issues. J. Wyley Sessions had lived in Pocatello and had worked for the University of Idaho before as a county agricultural agent;<sup>213</sup> therefore he knew the town, the university, and the people in the town and had the connections to establish the Institute there. While the success of the Institute was not guaranteed, the probability of it succeeding seemed promising. Sessions admitted that at Pocatello “we had virtually the same problems to go through there [as at Moscow] . . .”<sup>214</sup> It required some of the same effort that Sessions had expended at Moscow, but eventually he was successful.

Second, the LDS Church had the support of the president of the U of I, inaugurated on September 25, 1928, Frederick J. Kelly. He respected the LDS Church and what they were trying to do with the Institute program. In a letter dated October 23, 1929, in which Kelly sent his regrets that he could not attend the dedication of the

---

<sup>213</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "J. Wyley and Magdalene Sessions Interview," (Provo, Utah 1965), 1.

<sup>214</sup> ———, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," 9.



Institute building in Pocatello, he gave his opinion about having religious education offered at state supported institutions: “The churches are the agencies thru which religious instruction should be given. While students are receiving their secular education at state supported institutions the churches must remain active in providing the necessary religious education.”<sup>215</sup> President Kelly reasoned that when students leave home to attend college that the students “are more in need rather than less in need of church influence than formerly.” He called on the churches to recognize their responsibility to provide religious training at the state universities and colleges. At the same time he wanted the universities to incorporate the church-sponsored activities “in the general scheme of student life.”<sup>216</sup> Kelly approved of the new Institute at Pocatello in these words: “I gladly give assurance of hearty cooperation with the religious Institute constructed at the Southern Branch of the University. I believe in the efficacy of its services and trust that the church may realize richly from its investment.”<sup>217</sup> Having the support of President Kelly was a significant factor in contributing to the success of the Pocatello Institute.

The data about the U of U in Salt Lake City are very specific about the issues that the Latter-day Saint Church was trying to address by establishing an Institute near the university. On May 29, 1912, Superintendent Cummings reported to the General Board of Education that “the Authorities of the University of Utah were anxious to have some steps taken towards caring for the religious welfare of the Mormon students at the

---

<sup>215</sup>Frederick James Kelly, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions on October 23, 1929, from Frederick James Kelly, President of the University of Idaho," in *Church Education System* (Salt Lake City, UT: LDS Church Archives, 1929), 1.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

institution.”<sup>218</sup> Cummings continued in his report, “At present nothing is being done to look after them spiritually and as a result some of our best educated boys and girls are losing interest in the gospel and becoming tainted with erroneous ideas and theories.”<sup>219</sup> I am interpreting the phrase “look after them spiritually” and “caring for the religious welfare” as maintaining their orthodoxy; the phrase “becoming tainted with erroneous ideas and theories” I am interpreting as secularization. As discussed above, the “crisis of 1915” (or “the great debacle of 1915”) was a turning point in the history of the U of U. After that date, it became more identified with other American Colleges, which means that it became more secularized.<sup>220</sup> The twin issues of secularization and orthodoxy were the two main issues the Church was addressing when it established the Salt Lake Institute. With the selection of Dr. Lowell L. Bennion, the Church had a scholar who could reconcile the secular and religious worlds.

The location and establishment of the Institute in Los Angeles, California, was more a function of the initiative of USC in conducting an experiment of offering university credit for religion courses rather than the Latter-day Saints seeking to establish a religious enclave in Southern California. Without the invitation of USC, the establishment of an Institute in Los Angeles would have been delayed by at least a decade. Nevertheless, when the Church established its Institute near the campus of USC, it considered the worldly environment that had been created with the controlling factor of the fraternities and sororities over undergraduate life. Besides the worldliness milieu of

---

<sup>218</sup> James R. Clark, "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah" (Dissertation, Utah State University, 1958), 294.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Jeppson, "Secularization of the University of Utah," 9.

the Greek letter societies, the surrounding city of Los Angeles with the influence of the movie industry, the automobile culture, and the nearby beaches all contributed to a challenging environment which rivaled Babylon in attractions and temptations. The Church would emphasize maintaining orthodoxy while living in the world and not participating in its worldly practices

## Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions

- “The years 1920-1930, and since that time, may be referred to as the period of the development of programs of student religious work in the churches. This was true in practically all the churches. The programs were developed in the main around the thesis, ‘the Church follows its students.’”  
--H. D. Bollinger, Department of College and Religious Life,  
The Methodist Church, Nashville, Tennessee, 1953.
- “In the nineteenth century the chief Mormon challenge was to build and preserve a theocratic commonwealth that was at odds with the sectarian orthodoxy and mores of the day, the authority of the federal government, and the master trends of industrial capitalism. Having survived these irresistible pressures by making major concessions, the Mormon Church today is principally challenged in the same manner as all organized religion: by the secularization of modern culture. How have Mormon authorities responded to the challenges of secularization?”  
--Gordon and Gary Shepherd, Sociologists, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1984.
- “The Church schools must, it is true, give instruction in secular fields of learning, but this instruction should be given in such a manner and in such terms as will strengthen and build up the spiritual knowledge and experience of the students. . . . Indeed, the spiritual element, as revealed in the restored gospel, should dominate all else in the Church school system.”  
--First Presidency, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1945.

### Statement of the Principal Research Question

As the title of this research study indicates, I proposed to write a history of the founding of a religious education movement sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Institutes of Religion. This movement was originally known as “collegiate seminary” but later it was officially called the Institute of Religion. For the purposes of my study, I am referring to it as the Institute of Religion Movement (IRM). To frame my research and study, I asked this basic research question: how and why did this postsecondary religious education movement begin in the 1920s? In addition to that principal question, I have refined my research by framing three historically-related

research questions. In this concluding chapter, I propose to review the major findings and conclusions for each of these questions.

### **The First Research Question**

I shall begin with this question: how did the IRM get started—what was the milieu or socio-cultural context at its establishment? The first Institute of Religion was founded in 1926 near the campus of the University of Idaho (U of I) in Moscow, Idaho. The year of its founding is significant: the mid-1920s. There was a convergence of three key factors that influenced the Church leaders to take the initiative to start a college level religious education program.

First, I begin with the most significant factor, the economics of the 1920s and the financial condition of the LDS Church. The decade of the twenties began with severe economic difficulties with high inflation and high unemployment. Because of the drain on the Church's budget to maintain thirty-five academies coupled with the competition of the state public schools, the Church started to divest itself of the stake academies, secondary schools that were strategically placed mainly in Utah and other western states. When President Heber J. Grant addressed the membership of the Church assembled for general conference in April 1922, he shared with them the financial status of the Church and what it could financially support in education:

There has been expended for educational purposes \$893,000 [in 1921]. This is over 100 per cent, nearly 150 per cent more than it was a few years ago. I regret, because of the falling off in tithing, the discontinuance of dividends from sugar companies and other institutions, that we will have to curtail very materially during the coming year, our school activities.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Heber J. Grant, "Church Education," *Conference Report*, April 1922, 13.

Searching for ways to save money, the Church decided that financially it would be cheaper to maintain one religion instructor at a state school rather than support an entire school.

While reading the minutes that I was able to access of the Church Board of Education meetings during the 1920s, I discovered that there were some Church leaders who wanted to cease funding educational programs entirely. For example, in the meeting of the General Church Board of Education held Wednesday, February 20, 1929, Commissioner Joseph F. Merrill raised the question of closing Church schools. He shared with the Board members that “he was told when he entered the service [as Commissioner] that the policy of the Church was to eliminate Church Schools as fast as circumstances would permit.”<sup>2</sup> The Board members discussed the topic and each expressed his opinion about what should be done. President Nibley, a counselor in the First Presidency, expressed the opinion that because “the per capita cost was something like ten to one in favor of the seminaries it was decided to eliminate the schools and establish seminaries, . . .”<sup>3</sup> President Ivins, the other counselor in the First Presidency, supported Nibley’s suggestion. Adam S. Bennion, a Board member and the former Commissioner of Education, raised the point that before he left the Commissioner’s office that he had made the recommendation “that would, if followed, eventually eliminate all Church schools, including BYU.”<sup>4</sup> President Grant then spoke up and said, “It almost breaks one’s heart to think of closing these institutions which have done so

---

<sup>2</sup> Joseph F. Merrill, "Minutes of the meeting of the General Church Board of Education, Wednesday, February 20, 1929," in *William E. Berrett Church Educational System History Research Files 1899-1985* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1929), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

much good, but that the funds of the church would not permit of their maintenance in addition to the seminaries which are established and which are becoming more numerous yearly.”<sup>5</sup> A compromise was finally reached and the Board decided to eliminate most of the Church schools so as not to compete in secular education, but maintain a high school seminary program and expand the college program for just religious instruction.

A second major factor was the perception by the LDS Church leaders of strong social forces that were directing American youth away from traditional family values—the sanctity of marriage, abstinence until marriage, and the importance of family life and children—and codes of moral conduct—the importance of ethical behavior, honesty, integrity—and replacing them with worldly values of pleasure seeking and indulgence. Many of these social forces emerged in the 1920s (the Jazz Age, the “Roaring Twenties”) and caused concern with leaders of most churches, although LDS Church leaders began to preach about their concerns about the dress and dancing of the young people in the previous decade. It was President Joseph F. Smith in 1916 that raised the issue of proper dress and dance standards, arguing that “some of the social practices, particularly in matters of dress and dancing, need to be reformed.”<sup>6</sup> He spoke out forcefully against the lack of modesty among the young women of the Church: “We complain that our daughters go, shall I say, half-naked before the public. It is an outrage, and should not be tolerated by Latter-day Saints under any conditions.”<sup>7</sup> This same theme was preached

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>6</sup> James R. Clark, ed. *Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1916-1934*, 6 vols., vol. 5 (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1971), 39-41.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

from the pulpit by Joseph F. Smith's successor, President Heber J. Grant. In general conference in April 1922, Grant repeated the theme of modesty in dress:

I can remember when a young lady walked the streets of Salt Lake with her dress high enough to show the tops of her shoes, and an inch or two more, that we were shocked; but I have seen many a knee on the Temple grounds today, because the dresses were too short. Fathers and Mothers, use your influence with your modest, pure, sweet girls who, in their anxiety to follow fashion, are causing men to blush with shame!<sup>8</sup>

The theme of moral standards was repeated in the 1930s; in 1934 it was Melvin J.

Ballard, an apostle in the Church, who addressed a group of Church youth leaders about the necessity of maintaining the moral standards of the Church: "The moral standards set up by his Church are standards which must remain and which cannot be changed or modified without disaster to us."<sup>9</sup> He condemned "the display of the human body by the styles and customs of our day."<sup>10</sup> I have framed this entire milieu of pleasure seeking and indulgence as worldliness. The LDS Church leaders were very aware of the social currents of the 1920s and the 1930s and wanted to protect their young people from those worldly forces. This was a strong motivator for them to provide a religious education program.

Finally, the issue of secularization at the university level was a key factor. Some of the educational leaders of the Church had gone east and studied at the prestigious research universities. They had been exposed to the theories of science and the wisdom of the secular world; they had faced the intellectual challenges to their religious beliefs.

---

<sup>8</sup> Heber J. Grant, "An Appeal to Fathers and Mothers," *Conference Report*, April 1922, 165.

<sup>9</sup> Melvin J. Ballard, "Morality and the New Day," *Improvement Era* 1934, 515.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 516.



Joseph F. Merrill, the Commissioner of Church Education in 1926, had been trained in science at the University of Michigan and Johns Hopkins University. I argue that he was the intellectual and spiritual architect of the IRM, and as such he was the one who articulated the main objectives of the program. As a Ph.D. in science and as a university professor for many years, he understood the secular influences at the university level. Because of his insights into these secular forces, he held a unique perspective in working with college-aged students to help them adjust to and reach a reasonable accommodation with the university environment. He expressed his vision of the objective of the IRM: “And may I say that this objective, as I see it, is to enable our young people [Latter-day Saints] attending the colleges to make the necessary adjustments between the things they have been taught in the Church and the things they are learning in the university, to enable them to become firmly settled in their faith as members of the Church.”<sup>11</sup> Merrill did not condemn the teachings of the university, but he wanted the students to find a way—assisted by the Institute—to make “the necessary adjustments” between the worlds of the Church and the university.

In other correspondence with J. Wyley Sessions, Merrill addressed the same theme of the objective of the IRM. In a letter dated June 6, 1928, he used this language: “The primary purpose of this Sunday School [sponsored by the Institute] could be to enable students to become settled in their faith by harmonizing and reconciling the truths of the Gospel with the truths of science and scholarship that they are learning in

---

<sup>11</sup> Joseph F. Merrill, “Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928,” in *Sessions, James Wyley (1895-1977)* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church History Library and Archives, 1928), 1.

college.”<sup>12</sup> Often Merrill used “harmonizing,” “reconciling,” and “adjusting” when he wrote or spoke about the objectives of the IRM. The end result of providing a means for the students to reconcile and harmonize the two worlds of academia and the Church was “to hold them in the Church, make them active, intelligent, sincere Latter-day Saints. We want them from growing cold in the faith and indifferent to their obligations as Church members.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, Merrill wanted the students “to see that it is perfectly reasonable and logical to be really sincere Latter-day Saints.”<sup>14</sup> Merrill’s language here, “reasonable and logical” is the language of a scientist. He was convinced that true religion and true science could be reconciled; he felt that he had reconciled the two in his own life and he wanted that for the Latter-day Saint college students. He envisioned the Institute to be one of the means for helping students to make that reconciliation.

As I started this study, one of the first works that I read dealt with the challenges to modern Mormonism in a book by a Catholic sociologist, Thomas O’Dea. O’Dea’s thesis is that Mormonism’s greatest challenge is secularism.<sup>15</sup> In my study I have documented that secularization was an important factor with the educational leaders of the LDS Church in establishing the IRM, especially in the mind of Joseph F. Merrill. Each of these factors, the economic situation of the Church and the national and regional economic forces, the social forces of worldliness, and secularization all worked in

---

<sup>12</sup> ———, “Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, June 6, 1928,” in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

<sup>13</sup> ———, “Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928,” in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

<sup>14</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, “Letter to J. Wyley Sessions, July 26, 1928,” in *Church Educational System (1970-)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, LDS Church Archives, 1928), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas F O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

combination to influence the leaders of the LDS Church to begin and expand a college religious education program in the early part of the twentieth century.

### **The Second Research Question**

My second research question deals with the growth and expansion of the IRM. After the establishment of the first Institute in 1926 at the U of I in Moscow, Idaho, the movement continued to grow. With the creation of the next four Institutes in Utah, Idaho, and California, what was the milieu of the town and university of each of these subsequent Institutes? Here is where my case study of a religious education program takes on its local character. I discovered as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints expanded the IRM, each of the next four Institutes had a unique history. Let me summarize my findings of Chapter 4 with regards to the establishment of Institutes two through five.

The second Institute was established in Logan, Utah, in 1928. There was a sharp contrast between the Moscow Institute and the Logan Institute: first, the milieu of the two towns was completely different—Moscow, in northern Idaho, had a history of prejudice towards Mormons and had only a few Latter-day Saint students, whereas Logan, in northern Utah, was mostly Mormon and the college was ninety percent Latter-day Saint. Second, the eight stake presidents in Logan requested that the Church leaders provide an Institute in Logan and warmly welcomed it; in contrast, many residents of Moscow were suspicious of any Mormon activity around or near the university, fearing that J. Wyley Sessions was in Moscow to convert them to Mormonism and that he would advocate the moving of the U of I to southern Idaho. Third, the town of Logan and the university had a

positive working relationship with the LDS Church; Moscow and the U of I had little contact with the Church and so they did not have any type of relationship. Because of the nature of the relationship between Logan, the LDS Church, and the college, the establishment of the second Institute was a rather smooth and agreeable process. The first Institute director was W. W. Henderson, a zoology professor at the college, and as such he was familiar with the school, the town, and the students.

The third Institute was established in 1929 in Pocatello, Idaho. J. Wyley Sessions was invited to transfer from Moscow to Pocatello to the Southern Branch of the U of I. Because Sessions had lived and worked in Pocatello and because of his experience in establishing the first Institute, the process of establishing the Pocatello Institute was not a difficult one. The town of Pocatello definitely had more diversity than Moscow because it was a railroad town which brought in many different types of people. There were plenty of jobs related to the railroad and some manufacturing. Although Sessions was experienced at establishing a new Institute, he records that “We had the same problems to go through there [in Pocatello], but we finally got the faculty and the dean of the school, and then the Idaho Technical Institute, to accept the credit.”<sup>16</sup> In many ways the establishing of the third Institute was a repeat of what Sessions had done at Moscow. There were approximately 250 Latter-day Saint students enrolled in the university, definitely a minority, but they were well organized and active in all the Institute activities.

---

<sup>16</sup> J. Wyley Sessions, "J. Wyley Sessions: Oral History," in *The Joint Oral History Project, Brigham Young University Alumni Association Emeritus Club* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Archives, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, 1982), 9.

Salt Lake City was the site of the fourth Institute. In Chapter 4, I provided the details why Salt Lake city did not get an Institute Director until 1934 with the first classes held in 1935. The milieu of the city was definitely friendly towards the Institute because the majority of the residents and students were Latter-day Saints. The University of Utah (U of U) had gone through a secularization process after 1915 that created a type of barrier between the Church and the university. The U of U wanted to distance itself from the LDS Church and its influence in Salt Lake. At the beginning of the Salt Lake City Institute, several conditions existed that showed the strained relationship: no university credit was allowed, the Institute could not advertise or make announcements on the university campus through the school newspaper, and the director was advised to proceed cautiously in requesting university credit for the Institute classes. The director, Lowell L. Bennion made the best of a difficult situation. He worked cooperatively with the university and eventually was able to get approval for university credit. Because of Bennion's efforts, a type of symbiosis developed between the Institute and the U of U.

The fifth Institute was established at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles in 1935. USC was started as a Methodist institution and for many years had Methodist ministers for presidents. It had a strong connection with its Methodist roots for decades. As for Los Angeles with its beaches, the movie industry, its love affair with the automobile, and the presence of USC's sororities and fraternities, its milieu was completely unique to that of any of the other Institutes. The president of USC, von KleinSmid, along with the University Religious Conference (URC) initiated an experiment to allow university credit for religion classes, using the justification that

credit was offered for almost any philosophy, modern or ancient, they reasoned that credit should be offered to current religious bodies. Through the work of attorney Preston D. Richards, the Latter-day Saints were invited to participate in the educational experiment. Richards, who had been a law partner with J. Reuben Clark (who was now serving as a counselor in the First Presidency), worked his influence to get the Commissioner of Education, John A. Widtsoe, to take a year's leave of absence to teach the course on "The Church and Its Program." President Heber J. Grant, in his address in general conference in October 1935, praised what Widtsoe was doing at USC:

. . . Elder Widtsoe is doing something that we hope and pray will have a wonderful effect upon the people of the United States. Not only is Brother Widtsoe engaged in this work, but ministers of other denominations are being permitted to teach and preach the Gospel as they understand it to the students of the University of Southern California. Wonderful! May that same privilege be afforded to all universities.<sup>17</sup>

Widtsoe taught the religion classes for one academic year, and then he was replaced with G. Byron Done who was to organize the Los Angeles Institute. The Latter-day Saints were definitely a minority religious group at USC, but they became a strong, united group of students.

### **The Third Research Question**

My final research question deals with the development of the modern American university. I ask: how did secularization play out in the five universities where Institutes were established? What place did the universities find for the Latter-day Saint religious education program? The theme of secularization has been important in this study; from

---

<sup>17</sup> Heber J. Grant, "Authorities Absent," *Conference Report*, October 1935, 123.

the beginning of my research, I found that historians of American higher education believe that secularization was significant. Hofstadter and Hardy argue that “There are several major themes that command the attention of the historian of American higher education, but among these the oldest and longest sustained is the drift toward secularization.”<sup>18</sup> I agree with cultural historian Lynn Dumenil when she commented on secularization in the 1920s, the same era as my study: “While there is much evidence for the secularization of American culture in the 1920s, then, that secularization was a complex one.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the secularization in the 1920s was complex. Furthermore, Dumenil argues that the diverse nature of religion in that era suggests that it was “a period of ferment, as Americans reinterpreted or reaffirmed religious ideas in their struggle to make sense of their modern world.”<sup>20</sup>

In trying to make sense of secularization and how it played out in the five universities that I have studied, I have arrived at some general conclusions about secularization. First, secularization in the context of higher education is “the transformation from an era when organized Christianity and explicitly Christian ideals had a major role in the leading institutions of higher education to an era when they have almost none.”<sup>21</sup> This transformation was not only in quantity, the amount of influence, but in the quality of the influence as well. Second, secularization was a process which did not occur overnight or even in a year or a decade. In some institutions it occurred more

---

<sup>18</sup> Richard and Hardy Hofstadter, C. DeWitt, *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 3.

<sup>19</sup> Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 197.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>21</sup> George M. Marsden, "Introduction," in *The Secularization of the Academy*, ed. George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 5.

rapidly than others, but the fact is that it did occur. Most historians look at the period from just after the Civil War to the first decade of the twentieth century as the period in which it took place and had its greatest affect. It continued at various rates at individual colleges and universities after 1910, but this is the date that many historians use as a marker for secularization. Laurence Veysey in *The Emergence of the American University* argues that by 1910 the American university had “been urbanized and secularized; only the churches themselves remained to be affected more or less by the same process.”<sup>22</sup> Earl H. Brill agrees with Veysey, asserting that “by that time [1910], the major change from church college to secular university had been accomplished and, while the secularization process was not complete, the path of the future was marked out with some clarity.”<sup>23</sup>

Third, the process of secularization implies some type of “loss” or “decline,” but these terms carry negative connotations; my intention is not to judge secularization as necessarily a negative process. Depending on one’s perspective, secularization is considered by some as being immoral or evil. I tend to view it more as amoral—that it changed academia but the transformed university did not destroy religion or eliminate it entirely from its landscape. The university moved it from the centerpiece to another place. Brill describes it in these terms: “As religion lost its centrality in the life of the college, it became another extra-curricular student activity and took on the character of

---

<sup>22</sup> Laurence R Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago 1965), 56.

<sup>23</sup> Earl Hubert Brill, "Religion and the Rise of the University: A Study of the Secularization of American Higher Education, 1870-1910" (Historical dissertation, The American University, 1970), 6.



contemporary culture.”<sup>24</sup> Brill interprets the intentions of those who transformed the university: “It resulted [the shift of religion from the centerpiece], not from a drive against religion, but from the increased attention to purely educational concerns. Education simply moved into first place, shouldering aside the predominantly religious preoccupation of the traditional college.”<sup>25</sup> The five universities in my study all found a place and space for the Latter-day Saint Institutes. In the case of the Utah Agricultural College in Logan, Utah, the space was very near the center of the college campus, occupying one of the prime spots on campus.

Fourth, judging from the five universities in my study, all the presidents and university leaders were not anti-religion. They seemed receptive to having the influence of the Institute near their campuses. In fact, in the case of USC, the president was one of the motivating forces to invite the religious denominations to teach religion courses for university credit. Brill comments on the actions of most college presidents and university leaders: “They affirmed the validity and the value of the religious enterprise, not only in their public addresses but in their administrative decisions. While they refused to require attendance at chapel, they took pains to provide for worship on the campus.”<sup>26</sup>

Fifth, many of the college and university leaders were cooperative and encouraged the churches to establish student-oriented religious programs and organizations on their campuses. I have already alluded to the actions of President von

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 584.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 575.

KlienSmid at USC. He, along with the URC, was the driving force in inviting religious leaders to teach religion courses for university credit.

Another example of cooperation was Frederick James Kelly, the president at the U of I in Moscow. He was a strong advocate for religious education. In correspondence to Wyley Sessions, Kelly wrote, “Americans must always find a place for religious training in the all-around scheme of education.”<sup>27</sup> He believed that the churches were the correct agencies for providing religious instruction. He felt that when students left home for their college education that “they are more in need rather than less in need of church influence than formerly.”<sup>28</sup> He wrote Sessions that “I gladly give assurance of hearty cooperation with the religious institute constructed at the Southern Branch of the University. I believe in the efficacy of its service and trust that the church may realize richly from its investment.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Major Conclusions of my Research**

As I come to the end of this chapter, I want to make some final conclusions about my research. First, I found through experience the advice of my advisor to “narrow” the topic either in time period or, in my case, the number of institutes studied to be very helpful. One’s topic has to be humanly possible to complete, and “narrowing” the topic facilitates that process. Second, using the concepts of secularization, worldliness, and orthodoxy as lenses was useful in helping me collect understand, analyze and interpret my data. Third, studying these Institutes of Religion makes me appreciate the time,

---

<sup>27</sup> Frederick James Kelly, "Letter to J. Wyley Sessions on October 23, 1929, from Frederick James Kelly, President of the University of Idaho," in *Church Education System* (Salt Lake City, UT: LDS Church Archives, 1929), 1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

talents, and dedication of the men and women who established them and worked so diligently with the students. It was truly a labor of love and service. Fourth, while reading the documents in preparing this study, I felt a personal connection with the people about whom I was reading. Their stories and challenges came alive to me. I hope that I can convey in some small measure what they have accomplished and how they have made a difference in the lives of students. After all, is this not the role of the teacher?

### **Significance of the Study**

When I began my research, I found that the majority of the studies that had been conducted on the IRM were completed by “insiders,” instructors and administrators who worked for the LDS Church Education System. These researchers studied specific topics generally related to administrative and program effectiveness issues and were primarily conducted from a quantitative perspective. The significance of my study is fivefold: first, I am an “outsider,” meaning I am not a current employee or a former employee of the Church Education System which offers me some “research distance” to the topic. Second, my methodology is that of a historian of education, using historical documents to interpret past events. My study is not measuring or quantifying anything. Third, I am relating the establishment of the IRM to the broader socio-cultural milieu of American society, a major gap in the literature related to the IRM. Fourth, as historian F. Michael Perko wrote in 1991 that “certain denominations . . . that have generally been ignored out to become the subject of historical inquiry. There has been little historical research on schools sponsored by the Seventh Day Adventists, Nazarenes, Churches of Christ,

Assemblies of God, and Mormons, to cite only a few examples.”<sup>30</sup> In writing this dissertation, I am fulfilling in a small measure Perko’s challenge to write about educational programs that have had little historical research. Finally, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago Divinity School, Seth Perry, wrote in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in 2006: “One of the advantages of coming to Mormonism at this time is that there is so much unexplored territory, and so much that will need to be explored in a new way, with new assumptions about the subject and the audience.”<sup>31</sup> I hope that this dissertation can qualify in having covered some “unexplored territory” in a new way.

---

<sup>30</sup> F. Michael Perko, S. J., "Religious Higher Education in America: An Historiographic Survey," in *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, ed. John C. Smart (1991), 440.

<sup>31</sup> Seth Perry, "An Outsider Looks In at Mormonism," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 3, 2006, 9.

## Bibliography

### Manuscript Collections

University of Idaho Libraries, Special Collections and Archives. Moscow, Idaho.

Eldridge, Jay Glover. "Diaries, 1892-1962." In *Jay Glover Eldridge Diaries, 1892-1962*, MG 176, Boxes 1-2, 60, 86.

"Eldridge," MG 5001-MG-5023, Folder 5018.

Neale, M. G. "Letter from President M. G. Neale to W. C. Geddes." In *President's Office, Records, 1893-1965*, 1. 1933.

University Group 12, Boxes 16-19. Manuscript collection of the presidential papers for Alfred H. Upham, 1920-1927.

University Group 12, Boxes 22-26. Manuscript collection of presidential papers for Frederick J. Kelly, 1927-1930.

University Group 12, Boxes 26-34. Manuscript collection of the presidential papers for Mervin G. Neale (and interim), 1930-1937.

University of Idaho Bulletins, Catalogs 1926-1931.

LDS Institute of Religion Library. Moscow, Idaho.

Peterson, W. Homer, ed. *The Mormons on the Palouse: History and Recollections*. Pullman, Washington: Pullman Washington Stake, 1987.

"A Memorial Brochure of the Dedication of the Institute of Religion, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Adjacent to the University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho, Saturday, September 28, 1968." Edited by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1-11. Moscow, ID: n. p., 1968.

"Memory Book for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Moscow Institute of Religion: A Brief History of the Moscow Institute of Religion." 1-18. Moscow, ID: n. p., 2001.

Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library,  
L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Provo, Utah.

Gibbs, Rafe. "Tribute to the L.D.S. Institute at the University of Idaho." 1-3. Provo, UT: Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, n. d.

Sessions, J. Wyley. *J. Wyley Sessions Papers*, UA 156, Boxes 1-5.

Sessions, J. Wyley and Magdalen Sessions. "Interview, June 29, 1965, with Richard O. Cowan." 1-19. Transcript by Casey P. Griffiths. Copy of transcript and recording in author's possession.

Merrill, Joseph Francis. *Joseph Francis Merrill's Papers*. MSS 1540, Boxes 1-4.

Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Berrett, William E. "William E. Berrett CES History Research Files, 1899-1985." CR 102 174, Church Educational System (1970- ). Microfilm, reels 1 and 2.

Cummings, Horace H. "Annual Report for 1915." In *Board of Education (General Church), Minutes 1888-1990* 4. Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1915.

———. "Superintendent's Annual Report for the School Year Ending June 30th, 1919." In *Board of Education (General Church)*, 12. Salt Lake City, UT: Church History Library, 1919.

"Sessions, James Wyley 1885-1977," CR 102 208. "Church Educational System (1970- ), Subject Files ca. 1893-1977." "Papers of J. Wyley Sessions, Joseph F. Merrill, John A. Widtsoe, Moscow & Pocatello Institutes 1928-1939."

———. MS 15866. "Sessions, James Wyley 1855-1977, Interview at Laguna Hills, California, August 12, 1972.

#### Newspapers

|                                      |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Moscow-Pullman <i>Daily News</i>     | 1997       |
| Salt Lake City <i>Deseret News</i>   | 1943       |
| Moscow <i>Idaho Argonaut</i>         | 1928       |
| Cedar City <i>Iron County Record</i> | 1925       |
| Salt Lake City <i>Mormon Times</i>   | 2008, 2010 |
| Moscow <i>Times-Mirror</i>           | 1928       |

### Published Primary Sources

- Ballard, Melvin J. "Morality and the New Day." *Improvement Era*, 1934, 515-16, 527.
- Bennett, John C. *The History of the Saints, or, an Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism*. 3rd ed. Boston, Massachusetts: Leland & Whiting, 1842. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
- Bennion, Adam S. "The Latter-Day Saints and Education." *Improvement Era*, September 1920, 774-82.
- . "Preserving the Faith of Our Fathers and Mothers." *Relief Society Magazine*, September 1921, 502-07.
- Bennion, M. Lynn. *Recollections of a School Man: The Autobiography of M. Lynn Bennion*. Western Epics, 1987.
- Berrett, William E., in collaboration with Frank W. Hirschi. *A Miracle in Weekday Religious Education: A History of the Church Educational System*. Salt Lake City, UT: Salt Lake Printing Center, 1988.
- Breckinridge, John C. *The Substance of a Speech by Hon. John C. Breckinridge: Delivered in the Hall of the House of Representatives, at Frankfurt, Kentucky, December 21, 1859*. n.p.: BiblioLife. Historical speech, 2009.
- "Churches Prepare for Annual Fall Student Reception. Friday Night Nearly Every Denomination in the City Will Throw Its Doors Open." *Daily Star-Mirror*, October 3, 1928, 6.
- Clark, James R., ed. *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1833-1964*. 6 vols. Vol. 3. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1966.
- , ed. *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1916-1934*. 6 vols. Vol. 5. Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1971.
- Coe, George A. *What Ails Our Youth?* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925.
- "Dedicate Mormon Seminary Tuesday. Heber J. Grant, L.D.S. President, Will Be the Principal Speaker." *Idaho Argonaut*, October 2, 1928, 2.
- "Editorial: How Wild is Wild Youth?" *New Republic: A Journal of Opinion* 46, no. 596 (1926): 318-19.

- Faulkner, Anne Shaw. "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?" *Ladies' Home Journal* August 1921, 16, 34.
- Grant, Heber J. "An Appeal to Fathers and Mothers." *Conference Report*, April 1922, 165.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Authorities Absent." *Conference Report*, October 1935, 123.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Church Education." *Conference Report*, April 1922, 13.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Funding Church Education." *Conference Report*, April 1929, 2-6.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Seminary in Wyoming." *Conference Report*, April 1936, 11.
- Grundy, Mr. "Polite Society." *Atlantic Monthly* 125 (1920): 606-12.
- Hamilton, Mary Agnes. "Nothing Shocks Me." *Harper's Magazine*, July 1927, 150-57.
- Henderson, W. W. "Church Schools and Seminaries: The Logan L.D.S. Institute." *Improvement Era*, January 1934, 40.
- "Hold Classes in New Building." *The Iron County Record*, October 9, 1925, 1.
- "Institute Head [Thomas C. Romney] Retires." *Deseret News*, Saturday, May 8, 1943, 6.
- "L.D.S. Institute to Be Ready for Work in Fall." *Idaho Argonaut*, August 18, 1928, 2.
- Lindsey, Benjamin B., and Wainwright Evans. *The Revolt of Modern Youth*. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925.
- Lund, Anthon H. "Intellectual and Religious Development of Children." *Conference Report*, October 1904, 97.
- Lyford, C. P. *The Mormon Problem, an Appeal to the American People. With an Appendix, Containing Four Original Stories of Mormon Life, Founded on Fact, and a Graphic and Thrilling Account of the Mountain Meadows Massacre*. New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1886.
- Malone, Regina. "Has Youth Deteriorated? No: II.--The Fabulous Monster." *The Forum*, July 1926, 26-32.
- Merrill, Joseph F. "Department of Education: L.D.S. Institutes and Why." *Improvement Era*, December 1929, 135-37.



- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Truth-Seeker and Mormonism: A Series of Radio Addresses*. Independence, MO: Zion's Printing and Publishing Company, 1946.
- Muir, Leo J. *A Century of Mormon Activities in California: Volume 1, Historical*. A Century of Mormon Activities in California. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, n. d. [1952?]
- Muir, Leo J. *A Century of Mormon Activities in California: Volume 2, Biographical*. A Century of Mormon Activities in California. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1952.
- "Personal Glimpses: The Case against the Younger Generation." *Literary Digest*, June 17, 1922, 38-63.
- Richards, Stephen L. "Being Orthodox." *Conference Report*, April 1935, 28-30.
- Sessions, J. Wyley. "The Latter-day Saint Institutes." *Improvement Era*, July 1935, 412-15.
- Smith, Joseph F. "Dress and Social Practices." *Improvement Era*, December 1916, 172-73.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "God Neither Designs nor Is the Cause of Wickedness and Crime." *Conference Report*, April 1918, 169-170.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Unchastity the Dominant Evil of the Age." *Improvement Era*, June 1917, 738-43.
- Stearns, Wallace N. "The Report of the Committee of Six: Religious and Moral Education in the Universities and Colleges in the United States." *Religious Education* 1, no. 6 (February 1907): 201-25.
- Tall, Aldon. "Dr. Aldon Tall's Life History: An Oral History Conducted by Dr. Gary Shumway." Rigby, Idaho: privately published, n.d.
- Widtsoe, John A. "A Courageous Experiment." *Conference Report*, April 1936, 69-72.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *In a Sunlit Land: The Autobiography of John A. Widtsoe*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1952.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Religion 60 (1B), The Program of the 'Mormon' Church." Outline, 1-42; Transcript, 1-99. Los Angeles, CA: n. p., 1936.

Young, Brigham. *Journal of Discourses*. 26 vols. Liverpool, England: F. D. and S. W. Richards, 1854-1886.

#### Secondary Sources

Adams, James Truslow. "Our Dissolving Ethics." *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1926, 577-83.

Albrecht, Stan L., and Howard M. Bahr. "Patterns of Religious Disaffiliation: A Study of Lifelong Mormons, Mormon Converts, and Former Mormons." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22, no. 4 (December 1983): 366-79.

Alexander, Thomas G. "Manifesto, Second." In *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, edited by Donald Q. Cannon Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan, 702. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000.

———. *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1890-1930*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986.

———. *Utah, the Right Place: The Official Centennial History*. Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs-Smith, 1995.

Alexander, Thomas G., and James B. Allen. *Mormons and Gentiles: A History of Salt Lake City*. The Western Urban History Series. Vol. 5, Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Company, 1984.

Allen, Frederick Lewis. *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's*. New York: Harper & Row, 1931.

Allen, James B., and Glen M. Leonard. *The Story of the Latter-Day Saints*. 2nd, revised and enlarged ed. Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1992.

Anderson, Nels. "The Mormon Family." *American Sociological Review* 2, no. 5 (October 1937): 601-08.

Archibald, Helen Allan. "George A. Coe." Biola University, [www2.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=george\\_coe#author-info](http://www2.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=george_coe#author-info).

Arrington, Leonard J. *Adventures of a Church Historian*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1998.

———. "The Founding of the L.D.S. Institutes of Religion." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1967): 137-47.

- . *Great Basin Kingdom: An Economic History of the Latter-Day Saints, 1830-1900*. Studies in Economic History. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- . *History of Idaho*. 2 vols Moscow: University of Idaho Press, 1994.
- . Arrington, Leonard J., and Davis Bitton. *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*. 2nd ed. Urbana and Chicago, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Backman, Milton V., Jr. *Christian Churches of America: Origins and Beliefs*. Revised ed. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983.
- Ballard, Melvin J. "Morality and the New Day." *Improvement Era*, 1934, 515-16, 527.
- Bennion, Lowell L. "Reflections on T. Edgar Lyon: A Tribute Given at His Funeral." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 12-13.
- Bennion, Milton Lynn. *Mormonism and Education*. Salt Lake City, UT: Department of Education of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with the Deseret News Press, 1939.
- Berger, Peter L. "Epistemological Modesty: An Interview with Peter Berger." *The Christian Century*, October 29, 1967, 972-75; 78.
- . *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1969. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1967.
- Bergera, Gary James. *Statements of the L.D.S. First Presidency: A Topical Compendium*. Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 2007.
- Bergera, Gary James, and Ronald Priddis. *Brigham Young University: A House of Faith*. Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1985.
- Birmelé, André. "Protestantism." In *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, edited by Jean-Yves Lacoste, 1303-05. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Bitton, Davis. "Introduction." In *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, edited by Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, vii-xvii. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1987.
- Bradford, Mary Lythgoe. *Lowell L. Bennion: Teacher, Counselor, Humanitarian*. Salt Lake City, UT: Dialogue Foundation, 1995.

- Bruce, Steve, ed. *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. Reprint, 2001.
- Buchanan, Federick S. "Education among the Mormons: Brigham Young and the Schools of Utah." *History of Education Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1982): 435-59.
- Buchanan, Frederick S. "Mormon Response to Secular Education." *Religious Education* 81, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 643-54.
- Burrup, Jay G. "Pocatello (Shoshoni Chief)." In *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, edited by Donald Q. Cannon, Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan, 929-30. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000.
- Burtchaell, James Tunstead. "The Decline and Fall of the Christian College." *First Things: The Journal of Religion, Culture, and Public Life* (April 1991): 16-22.
- . *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998.
- Bushman, Richard Lyman. "A Joseph Smith for the Twenty-First Century." Chapter 17 In *Believing History: Latter-Day Saint Essays*, edited by Reid L. Neilson and Jed Woodworth. 262-78. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- . "What's New in Mormon History: A Response to Jan Shipps." *Journal of American History* 94, no. 2 (2007): 517-21.
- Bushman, Richard Lyman, with the assistance of Jed Woodworth. *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.
- Carmichael, Reese. "Those Dreadful Young Persons: A Popular Myth of the Present Day." *Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1921, 18, 56.
- Carter, John F., Jr. "These Wild Young People by One of Them." *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1920, 301-04.
- Chamberlin, Ralph V. *The University of Utah: A History of Its First Hundred Years, 1850 to 1950*. Edited by Harold W. Bentley. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1960.
- Chaves, Mark. "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority." *Social Forces* 72, no. 3 (March, 1994): 749-74.

- Cloward, Robert A. "The Cedar City, Utah Origin of the Institute of Religion Program." In *Thirty-Sixth Annual Conference of the Mormon History Association*, 1-23. Cedar City, UT: Unpublished, 2001.
- Cobb, William. "The West Point of Fundamentalism." *American Mercury*, January 1929, 104-12.
- Cremin, Lawrence A. *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*. First ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961.
- Dash, Norman. *Yesterday's Los Angeles*. Seemann's Historic Cities 30 vols. Vol. Seemann's Historic Cities Series No. 26, Miami, FL: E. A. Seemann Publishing, 1976.
- Davidson, James D., and Gary J. Quinn. "Theological and Sociological Uses of the Concept 'Orthodoxy'." *Review of Religious Research* 18, no. 1 (1976): 74-80.
- Defenbach, Byron. *Idaho: The Place and Its People, a History of the Gem State from Prehistoric to Present Days*. 3 vols. Vol. 3, Chicago: American Historical Society, 1933.
- DeMartini, Joseph R. "Student Culture as a Change Agent in American Higher Education: An Illustration from the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Social History* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 526-41.
- Drowne, Kathleen, and Patrick Huber. *The 1920s. American Popular Culture through History*. edited by Ray B. Browne Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Dumenil, Lynn. *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.
- England, Eugene, ed. *The Best of Lowell L. Bennion: Selected Writings: 1928-1988*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1988.
- Eisenmann, Linda. "Reclaiming Religion: New Historiographic Challenges in the Relationship of Religion and American Higher Education." *History of Education Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1999): 295-306.
- Esplin, Scott C, E. Vance Randall, A. LeGrand Richard, and Clifford T. Mayes. "Education in Transition: L.D.S. (Mormon) Educational Change within American Society, 1888-1933." In *American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting*, 1-48, 2008.

- Fass, Paula S. *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Flake, Kathleen. *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Flanagan, Maureen A. *America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms, 1890s-1920s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Fletcher, Peggy. "Saint for All Seasons. An Interview with Lowell L. Bennion." *Sunstone: Mormon Experience, Scholarship, Issues, & Art*, February 1985, 6-17.
- "For the Strength of Youth: Fulfilling Our Duty to God." edited by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1-47. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001.
- Foster, Craig L. "Mormonism of the Frontier: The Saints of the Great Basin." Chapter 6 in *Excavating Mormon Pasts: The New Historiography of the Last Half Century*, edited by Newell G. Bringhurst and Lavina Fielding Anderson. 137-64. Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2004.
- Fowles, John L. "Brief Historical Sketch of the Logan L.D.S. Institute of Religion: Seventy-Five Years of Excellence in Education by Study and Also by Faith." In *The Logan L.D.S. Institute of Religion: Fall Class Schedule, The Historical Edition*, 1-5. Logan, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003.
- Furniss, Norman F. *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-1931*. Edited by Lewis P. Curtis. Vol. 59, Yale Historical Publications. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954.
- Garr, Arnold K. "Brigham Young College." In *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, edited by Donald Q. Cannon, Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan, 133. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000.
- Garrett, H. Dean. "Cache Valley." In *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, edited by Donald Q. Cannon, Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan, 163-64. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000.
- Gauss, Christian, ed. *The Teaching of Religion in American Higher Education*. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1951.
- Gerould, Katherine Fullerton. "Reflections of a Grundy Cousin." *Atlantic Monthly*, August 1920, 157-63.

- Gleason, Philip. *Contending with Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Griffiths, Casey Paul. "The Chicago Experiment: Finding the Voice and Charting the Course of Religious Education in the Church." *B.Y.U. Studies* 49, no. 4 (2010): 91-130.
- . "The First Institute Teacher." *Religious Educator* 11, no. 2 (2010): 175-201.
- Haddock, Sharon. "First Institute of Religion Rooted in Faith: A Father's Concern for Daughters Led to Building." *Mormon Times*, August 28, 2010, 1, 10.
- Hofstadter, Richard and Hardy, C. DeWitt. *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1952.
- Hoge, Dean R. *Commitment on Campus: Changes in Religion and Values over Five Decades*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974.
- Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.
- "Institute of Religion: Frequently Asked Questions." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, <http://institute.lds.org/faq/>.
- Johnson, Henry C., Jr. "'Down from the Mountain': Secularization and the Higher Learning in America." *The Review of Politics* 54, no. 4 (1992): 551-88.
- Johnson, Jeffrey Ogden. "Deseret, State Of." In *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, edited by Daniel H. Ludlow, 371-73. New York: Macmillan, 1992.
- Knowlton, Don. "The Anatomy of Jazz." *Harper's Magazine*, April 1926, 578-85.
- Kyvig, David E. *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1939: Decades of Promise and Pain*. Greenwood Press "Daily Life through History" Series. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- Larson, Gustive O. *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood*. San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1971.
- Lee, Michael. "Higher Criticism and Higher Education at the University of Chicago: William Rainey Harper's Vision of Religion in the Research University." *History of Education Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2008): 508-33.

- Leuba, James Henry. *The Belief in God and Immortality: A Psychological, Anthropological and Statistical Study*. Boston: Sherman, French and Company, 1916.
- . *A Psychological Study of Religion: Its Origin, Function, and Future*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912.
- Leuchtenburg, William E. *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32*. The Chicago History of American Civilization. edited by Daniel J. Boorstin. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958.
- Levine, David O. *The American College and the Culture of Aspiration, 1915-1940*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986.
- Lyon, Jr., T. Edgar. *T. Edgar Lyon: A Teacher in Zion*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2002.
- Madsen, Brigham D. *Chief Pocatello, the "White Plume."* Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, Bonneville Books, 1986.
- Madsen, Carol Cornwall. "Primary." In *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, edited by Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan, 949-51. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000.
- Magleby, Ward H. "1926 Another Beginning Moscow Idaho: A Solid Foundation Is Laid for the Institute Program." *Impact: Weekday Religious Education Quarterly*, Winter 1968, 22-23; 27, 31-32.
- Marsden, George M. *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987.
- . "The Soul of the American University: A Historical Overview." Chapter 1, "The Soul of the American University: A Historical Overview" In *The Secularization of the Academy*, edited by George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield. Religion in American Series, 9-45. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- . *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Marsden, George M. "Introduction." In *The Secularization of the Academy*, edited by George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, 3-8. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.



- Mauss, Armand L. *The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- . "Assimilation and Ambivalence: The Mormon Reaction to Americanization." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 30-67.
- Mauss, Armand L. "Refuge and Retrenchment: The Mormon Quest for Identity." In *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, edited by Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young, 24-42. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- May, Henry F. "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920's." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43, no. 3 (December 1956): 405-27.
- Mazur, Eric Michael. *The Americanization of Religious Minorities: Confronting the Constitutional Order*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- McConkie, Bruce R. *Mormon Doctrine*. 2nd ed. Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966.
- McMahon, John R. "Back to Prewar Morals: Toddling to the Pit by the Jazz Route--How New York Sets the Pace." *Ladies' Home Journal*, November 1921, 13; 106-08.
- . "Unspeakable Jazz Must Go!" *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1921, 34; 115-16.
- Mead, Frank S., and Samuel S. Hill. Revised by Craig D. Atwood. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*. 11th ed. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001.
- Merriam, Sharan B. *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1988.
- Millet, Robert L. "The Educational System of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." Chapter 2 in *Religious Higher Education in the United States: A Source Book*, edited by Thomas C. Hunt and James C. Carper. Source Books on Education, 49-68. New York: Garland Publishing, 1996.
- Montague, George T., (S. M.). *The Biblical Theology of the Secular*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Bruce Publishing Company, 1968.
- Moss, George Donelson. *America in the Twentieth Century*. 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000.

- Nibley, Hugh W. "Chapter 11: Educating the Saints." In *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless: Classic Essays of Hugh W. Nibley*, edited by Hugh W. Nibley. Volume One in the Religious Studies Monograph Series, 229-60. Salt Lake City, UT: Publishers Press, 1978.
- O'Dea, Thomas F. *The Mormons*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Parrish, Alan K. *John A. Widtsoe: A Biography*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2003.
- . "University Credit for L.D.S. Religion Classes at U.S.C.: A Mormon Apostle in Trojan Classrooms." In *Regional Studies in Latter-Day Saint Church History: California*, edited by Robert C. Freeman, David F. Boone, Andrew H. Hedges, and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel. 167-87. Provo, UT: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1998.
- Parrish, Michael E. *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression, 1920-1941*. The Norton Twentieth Century America Series, edited by General Editor John Morton Blum. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992.
- Perko, F. Michael, S. J. "Religious Higher Education in America: An Historiographic Survey." In *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, edited by John C. Smart. 420-47, 1991.
- Perrett, Geoffrey. *America in the Twenties: A History*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.
- Perry, Seth. "An Outsider Looks In at Mormonism." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 3, 2006, 9.
- Poll, Richard D., ed. *Utah's History*. edited by Eugene E. Campbell, Thomas G. Alexander, and David E. Miller (associate editors). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1989.
- Porter, David R., ed. *The Church in the Universities*. New York: Association Press, 1925.
- Priest, A. J. G. "The Dean." *The Beta Theta Pi*, June 1956, 454-55.
- Puth, Robert C. *American Economic History*. 3rd ed. ForthWorth, TX: The Dryden Press, 1993.
- Quinn, D. Michael. "The Brief Career of Young University at Salt Lake City." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 69-89.

- . *J. Reuben Clark: The Church Years*. Life and Work of J. Reuben Clark, Jr. edited by general editor David H. Yarn. 3 vols. Vol. 2, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1983.
- . "Utah's Educational Innovation: L.D.S. Religion Classes, 1890-1929." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1975): 379-89.
- Record, Patricia L. "The Trapper, the Indian, and the Naming of Logan." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 364-71.
- Reuben, Julie A. *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Rice, Richard B., William A. Bullough, and Richard J. Orsi. *The Elusive Eden: A New History of California*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988.
- Ricks, Joel Edward. "The Settlement of Cache Valley." *Utah Historical Quarterly* 24 (1956): 318-37.
- . *The Utah State Agricultural College: A History of Fifty Years, 1888-1938*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News Press, 1938.
- Riley, W. B. "The Faith of the Fundamentalists." *Current History*, June 1927, 434-40.
- Rimington, David B. *Vistas on Visions: A Golden Anniversary History of Church Education in Southern California*. Anaheim, CA: Shumway Family History Services, 1988.
- Roberts, B. H. *The Missouri Persecutions*. Salt Lake City, UT: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1899. Reprint, 1965.
- Robson, Stuart. *The First World War*. Seminar Studies in History. edited by Clive and Gordon Martel Emsley London and New York: Longman, 1998.
- Rollin, Lucy. *Twentieth-Century Teen Culture by the Decades: A Reference Guide*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Saunders, Arthur C. *The History of Bannock County Idaho*. Pocatello, ID: The Tribune Company, 1915.
- Savage, Jon. *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture*. New York: Viking, 2007.

- Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. Revised and enlarged edition ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.
- Schwantes, Carlos A. *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska, 1991.
- "Seminaries and Institutes of Religion: Annual Report for 2010." 1-8. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010.
- Servin, Manuel P., and Iris Higbie Wilson. *Southern California and Its University: A History of U.S.C., 1880-1964*. Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1969.
- Setran, David P. *The College "Y": Student Religion in the Era of Secularization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Shedd, Clarence Prouty. *The Church Follows Its Students*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938.
- Sherlock, Richard. "Campus in Crisis: B.Y.U., 1911." *Sunstone: Mormon Experience, Scholarship, Issues, & Art*, January-February 1979, 10-16.
- Shepherd, Gordon and Gary Shepherd. *A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism*. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1984.
- Shill, Aaron. "History Written on Walls at Logan Institute of Religion." *Mormon Times*, March 5, 2008.
- Shiner, Larry. "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 6, no. 2 (Autumn 1967): 207-20.
- Shippo, Jan. "Beyond the Stereotypes: Mormon and Non-Mormon Communities in Twentieth-Century Mormondom." In *New Views of Mormon History: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington*, edited by Davis Bitton and Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, 342-60. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1987.
- Skinner, Andrew C. "Ricks College." In *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, edited by Donald Q. Cannon Arnold K. Garr, and Richard O. Cowan, 1027-30. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2000.
- Sloan, Douglas. *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.

- Smith, Christian, ed. *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003.
- Smith, Joseph. *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, the Prophet with Some Additions by His Successors in the Presidency of the Church*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989.
- Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Mormonism*. edited by Reid L. Neilson. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. "Secularization and Cult Formation in the Jazz Age." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 20, no. 4 (1981): 360-73.
- Starr, Kevin. *Material Dreams: Southern California through the 1920s*. Americans and the California Dream. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Sweinhart, Henry L. "The 'Human Cost' of the World War." *The Outlook*, January 7, 1920, 42-43.
- Swensen, Russel B. "Mormons at the University of Chicago Divinity School." *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 37-47.
- Syrett, Nicholas L. *The Company He Keeps: A History of White College Fraternities*. Gender and American Culture, edited by Thadius M. Davis and Mary Kelly. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Talmage, James E. "Homeward Bound." *Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, August 19, 1926, 524-25.
- Temple, Anne. "Has Youth Deteriorated? Yes: I.--Reaping the Whirlwind." *The Forum*, July 1926, 21-26.
- Tewksbury, Donald G. *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities before the Civil War: With Particular Reference to the Religious Influences Bearing Upon the College Movement*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1932. Historical survey. Hamden, Conn: Archon Books, 1965. Teachers College, Columbia University. 1932.
- Thelin, John R. *A History of American Higher Education*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Uchtdorf, Dieter F. "Two Principles for Any Economy." *Ensign*, November 2009, 55-58.

- Veysey, Laurence R. *The Emergence of the American University*. Chicago: University of Chicago 1965.
- Walker, Ronald W. "Heber J. Grant and the Panic of 1893." *B.Y.U. Studies* 43, no. 1 (2004): 115-42.
- Warnick, Bryan A. "Bringing Religious Traditions into Educational Theory: Making an Example of Joseph Smith, Jr." *Educational Theory* 54, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 345-64.
- Wells, Merle W. "Origins of Anti-Mormonism in Idaho, 1872-1880." *Idaho Yesterday: The Journal of the Idaho State Historical Society* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 47-58.
- White, Vera. "Institute Nutured Family's Faith through Generations." *Moscow-Pullman Daily News*, October 28, 1997, 3.
- Wilkinson, Ernest L., ed. *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*. 4 vols. Vol. 1. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975.
- Wright, Dennis A. "The Beginnings of the First L.D.S. Institute of Religion at Moscow, Idaho." *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 65-84.
- Wuthnow, Robert. "Studying Religion, Making It Sociological." Chapter Two In *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by Michele Dillon. 16-30. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Applied Social Research Methods Series. edited by Leonard Bickman and Debra Rog. Revised ed. Vol. 5, Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1989.
- Zeit, Joshua. *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2006.

#### Dissertations and Theses

- Anderson, A. Gary. "A Historical Survey of the Full-Time Institutes of Religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1926-1966." Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 1968.
- Bell, Kenneth G. "Adam Samuel Bennion: Superintendent of L.D.S. Education, 1919-1928." Master of Religious Education, Brigham Young University, 1969.
- Bradshaw, Frank W. "The Administrative Organization of the Latter-Day Saints Institutes of Religion." Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1966.

- Brill, Earl Hubert. "Religion and the Rise of the University: A Study of the Secularization of American Higher Education, 1870-1910." Historical dissertation, The American University, 1970.
- Campbell, Eugene Edward. "A History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in California, 1846-1946." Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1952.
- Clark, James R. "Church and State Relationships in Education in Utah." Dissertation, Utah State University. 1958.
- Daly, Ronald Thomas. "Student Programs Sponsored by Religious Groups in Cooperation with Institutions of Higher Learning." Thesis, University of Utah, 1964.
- Deschamps, Nello Earl. "The Secularization of American Higher Education: The Relationship between Religion and the University as Perceived by Selected University Presidents, 1867-1913." Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1976.
- Done, G. Byron. "The Participation of the Latter-Day Saints in the Community Life of Los Angeles." Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1939.
- Dunn, Paul Harold. "An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Latter-Day Saint Institutes of Religion." Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1959.
- Esplin, Scott C. "Education in Transition: Church and State Relationships in Utah Education, 1888-1933." Dissertation, Brigham Young University, 2006.
- Fowles, John Lessing. "A Study Concerning the Mission of the Week-Day Religious Educational Program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1890-1990: A Response to Secular Education." Dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 1990.
- French, Calvin V. "Organization and Administration of the Latter-Day Saint School System of Free Education, Common School through University of Nauvoo, Illinois, 1840-1845." Thesis, Temple University, 1965.
- Griffiths, Casey Paul. "Joseph R. Merrill: Latter-day Saint Commissioner of Education, 1928-1933." Master of Arts in Religious Education, Brigham Young University, 2007.
- Hartshorn, Leon Roundy. "Mormon Education in the Bold Years." Dissertation, Stanford University, 1965.

- Higbee, Joseph Marvin. "Objectives and Functions of the Latter-day Saints Institutes of Religion." Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1966.
- Hungerford, Curtiss Randall. "A Study in University Administrative Leadership: Rufus B. Von Kleinsmid and the University of Southern California, 1921-1935." Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1968.
- Jarman, Dean. "Requirements of Effective Administrative Behavior in the Latter-Day Saints Institutes of Religion." Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1966.
- Jeppson, Joseph Horne. "The Secularization of the University of Utah, to 1920." Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1973.
- Jorgensen, LeRoy I. "A study of Student Reaction to the Curriculum in the Institutes of Religion of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." A Report of a Field Project, Brigham Young University, 1965.
- Meservy, Royal Ruel. "A Historical Study of Changes in Policy of Higher Education in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints." Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1966.
- Patrick, John R. "The School of the Prophets: Its Development and Influence in Utah Territory." Master of Arts, Brigham Young University, 1970.
- Peterson, Orlen Curtis. "A History of the Schools and Educational Programs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ohio and Missouri, 1831-1839." Master of Arts, Brigham Young University, 1972.
- Richards, Wilford Woodruff. "A Study of the Contributions in Personal Guidance Made by the Logan Latter-Day Saints Institute of Religion to the Students of the Utah State Agricultural College." Dissertation, Leland Stanford Junior University, 1943.
- Skerpan, Alfred Lindsay. "A Place for God: Religion, State Universities, and American Society, 1865-1920." Dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998.